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THE PREACHER AND HIS MESSAGE.

By the Rev. Bernard J. Snell, M.A., B.Sc.*

"We are ambassadors for Christ."—2 Cor. v. 20.

WHILE books were dear, and newspapers thin and scarce, and free libraries unknown, the pulpit gave to many people one break in the prosaic monotony of their lives, and afforded their sole mental and moral stimulant. But now popular literature is poured forth from the press; the results of scholarship, the best poetry, the ripest thought, are no longer the prerogative of the few; lectures and classes, libraries and cheap books, are within the reach of every one; all subjects are freely, fearlessly discussed, and the teaching function of the pulpit has been largely superseded. But man has not ceased to be a gregarious animal because he has taken to reading. You are something more than an intellectualist, and you cannot nourish your soul to any extent in solitary study. Thought and feeling play more freely in company; the sympathy of numbers intensifies the power of a man's spiritual apprehension, and nerves his soul for finer endeavours. There is a profound

* Preached in Brixton Independent Church on Sunday morning, October 4th, 1891.

philosophy in that promise of Christ that "where two or three are gathered together in His name," there is He in the midst.

A man's faith gains every way from being shared by others; it is echoed back and intensified within himself beyond calculation. Do you not remember that even Christ Himself conformed to the ancient usage of His people—I mean, the usage of the public gathering for worship and the set time for prayer? Sometimes those services that He attended must have been very thin, and poor, and unprofitable to Him—sometimes, but He went. And when we meet together in the name of one Master and look up to one Father, then we feel and realise as we cannot else do that we are brethren, comrades, fellow-pilgrims in the infinite. The Churches are just the application of the social principle to religion. The social principle is useful elsewhere; it is useful in religion too. Elsewhere you are associated together through other interests: political interests and commercial interests; here in the Church men are associated as men. All the petty things that belong to us as units drop away from us; we are men. Here we know one another at the best. We stand on the common platform of one trust and one helplessness, one confession, one great conviction. When we unite in the chorus of humility, when we join in the chant of aspiration, there is an end for the moment of that individuality that at other times keeps heart from heart and shuts each one of us up in his own narrow little cell. Under the stress of these master truths of life, as we look up into the pure eyes of the All-Father and together stretch forth our

hands to touch the hem of that all-girdling robe, we become more vividly conscious of the hold that thus our faith and hope have over us, and we learn more and differently than at any other time that He is one to us all, and that we are not different very much, but much the same, to Him.

It is on that basis, the basis of association, that our Churches rest. My good friend, it is very easy to call the Churches very hard names; but, after all, criticism of the Churches is very poor work. They are about the best things going. Are you surprised to hear me say that? They are about the best things going. Why, their very purpose is enough to consecrate them; they are made holy by the cry of human hearts in their sore needs. What other institution is there in the world that aims definitely to help men love God and love one another, to love the great Father and their poor neighbours—aims at it? Think, men gather together to aid one another in the hard task of living upright lives amid the perplexities of thought, mysterious problems that no man has an answer for. A few fellow-mortals meet together to share with one another all that they can give one another to support them as pilgrims towards the unknown. In the solemn hush of worship and with the sounding hymn they try together to nerve their souls, try to refresh their faith and reinspire their courage. Ah, that is sacred—sacred if there is anything sacred in the world.

I allow freely the thousand imperfections that there are in the Churches, but, after all, these Churches of ours are the sanctuary, the breakwater that keeps

back the waves of materialism from drowning out the higher life ; after all, these Churches are the fountains of the best influences that flow through the community; after all, these Churches are the reservoirs of beneficent and self-sacrificing endeavour ; after all, beside their still waters longing souls take heart of grace, and solitary ones catch a glimpse of the stars of God over them : many a lost wanderer finds the clue of his life again, and comes to his true self. That is sacred.

My brethren, it is on that basis that I conceive the pulpit to rest. It answers a human need. For when men meet for religious purposes, they call for instruction and for exhortation, and to be done adequately that does need specialists—I mean, men who study the best thoughts of the best men ; men who are trained to speak about spiritual things ; men who are set apart by the imperative within them and by the call of others without, set apart for the quickening of the life that is Divine and for the interpretation to the general conscience of the spirit of life in Christ ; as the Apostle called them, "stewards of the mysteries of God." I cannot undervalue the importance of the Christian ministry. Why, even if my own self-respect permitted it, how could I in this place, that is fragrant for many of you with the memories of such loyal and efficient service rendered by those who were my predecessors in this office? But let the man be who he may be, if he stand saying from out the heart of him the best words that he has to say of brotherly love and heavenly hope to men who are suffering and sinning as he, and if he stand trying, trying with all the strength of him, to quicken purity

and righteousness, giving them the stimulus that comes by his own faith, and endeavouring, though never so poorly, to save the souls of men, he is engaged in a task that demands respect from earnest citizens.

And, with all our printing, preaching seems to me likely to be a perennial function. It is still the cardinal educator of the Gospel of Christ, and all that it means to the souls of men, as it has been since the days when Christ preached His own sermons and told His own stories to the people of Palestine. You remember, when Christ stood on the threshold of His ministry, He told His hearers what He felt called to do. He read from the ancient Scriptures that ideal ministry which He founded. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Do you think He meant only poor in purse, and the imprisoned, and the physically blind, and the socially oppressed? He did mean those, for through all time Christ is on the side of those who are in trouble, and where He is most needed, there most is He. He did mean those, and His Gospel has wrought revolution in the interests of the poor; His Gospel has initiated influences which have reformed prisons, and built hospitals, and abolished the slavery of which He spoke. But those are but the outward and visible signs of a more radical spiritual healing. "Glad tidings to the poor"—yes, to those who are poor in hope, and poor in affection, and poor in

aspiration ; release to those who are bound in selfishness, and ignorance, and evil habit ; sight to those who are blind—blind to a God at work in their lives, blind to a heaven radiant above them ; healing to bruised souls and burdened consciences ; a way for the weary to find God again ; and help for the faint-hearted and overtried to believe in the love, and truth, and goodness of God.

That is Christ's ideal, and that, after all, is the pattern of the Christian ministry, which is the pathos and despair of us preachers, ay, but the inspiration of us, too. No preacher dare compare himself with that wondrous Teacher ; no preacher dare use those words save in the reverent awe with which we speak of Him : but, indeed, unless a preacher can say, " I too have a message ; I too have a mission," he is not called to be a preacher, nor can he have a part with Christ in raising the temple of redeemed humanity. No preacher puts his poor work alongside that ideal without bitter self-reproach. Oh, you may censure an earnest minister, sometimes rightly, for his mistakes and his weaknesses, but you can never censure him as severely as he censures himself. Who will preach to the preachers? Sometimes you ask, "Quis custodiet custodes?" Oh, their own consciousness and thought of failure will preach to them. Depend upon it, if sometimes I seem to you to be very severe on you, I shall be much more severe on myself, or I ought to be.

" We are ambassadors for Christ." My message is the Gospel of Christ, that soul and substance of the Christian faith which I verily believe, God-spell, God-

story, that story of Christ which is meant to save us. It has been preached here in the music of rare speech, with eloquence that I cannot imitate, and with a fervour that I can only pray for. The only poor eloquence that I can claim is speaking out of my life the truth that has hold of me; the only originality possible to me is a personal apprehension of those Christian verities. As we worship and think together, I hope that we may learn to understand our most holy faith more sympathetically, hope that we may find together a deeper and a larger meaning in Christ, the Word of God. But, however distorted and maimed by my inadequacies, it will be the same theme as that which beat through the finer utterances of those who stood here before me, and with that record the most foolish and feeble preaching may convey the wisdom and power of God unto salvation to hearts that long for it.

The times have changed since you erected this building and put it in trust that here a man might stand and preach the Gospel of the love of God in Christ. But that Gospel is not yet an ineffectual ghost; that Gospel shows no sign of becoming obsolete. Age cannot wither nor custom stale its infinite variety. We have to preach to the times. Yes, yes, but what are the times? Men and women are the same, and likely to be. Our needs do not vary much from generation to generation. The sense of our mortality falls on us like a shadow as it fell on our fore-leaders. Still care and sorrow set on our homes; the mystery and sadness of life press on us the awful questions, "Whence?" and "Whither?" Still "Conscience

doth make cowards of us all." For sin is the same intolerable burden as it was in the olden days, and hearts in the strain of temptation, and the agony of bereavement, and the bitterness of evil retrospection cry out for the living God. And as your minister I am concerned most of all with those truisms of our life, the truism of the cradle and the truism of the grave, of shifting fortune and the surprises of destiny, of true love's joy and the woe of lost and breaking hearts and shattered hopes, and the emptiness of the unkept vow; and as your minister I have to speak of the commonplaces of sin and salvation, death and judgment, and I have to tell the same story of the infinite pity, the glorious Gospel, of the blessed God. Thank God, that, too, is a commonplace to you, that it has not changed. It is a thing worthy the tongues of angels. And I wonder, as I have wondered oft, how I can rise to the height of that great argument. But my felt weakness is the guardian of my true strength and yours.

You have called me to be your minister in Christ, that is, not only to clothe these truths, which are for all time, in the raiment of to-day, not only to show you what is good, but to help you to be good. Am I right—to help you to be good? Else why are you here, and why am I here? Brethren in Christ, you command all the service I can render you in that. I will speak to you, not merely as listeners to be momentarily entertained, but I will speak to you as men and women who want all the help to enable them to live better lives, and to bear the burdens God may place upon their shoulders, and to keep brave

and loyal souls within them without fear and without reproach, and to get a firmer grasp of the hand of Christ and love and duty.

Brethren, we will pray together for that, else the walls might better tumble. We live in an age, I think, in a day, of the Son of man. It seems to me, to you too, that the air is pregnant with change. The questions which our fathers asked have long been superseded by deeper and more vital questions. The Churches are growing more real, more sympathetic, more human, more natural, more rational and Christlike. I believe that Christ is coming to the world again, coming trampling down the barbed fences that men have put around heaven's gateway, and rending the narrow traditions of the elders. He gives the spirit of a truer age, when all that is not good or true shall die, when all that is bad in custom, false in creed, and all that makes the boor and mars the man, shall pass away for ever. He is coming like sunshine into the souls that are opened for His coming. Yea, Lord Christ, come quickly, and may we be willing in the day of Thy power, that we may be Thy soldiers all. Amen.

CHRIST THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW.

By the Rev. John Clifford, D.D.*

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."—St. Matt. v. 17.

EVERY thoughtful and reflective person will have made himself aware of this: that it is impossible accurately and comprehensively to understand the character and work of our Divine Lord without knowing something about the institutions which were operative in Palestine in the time of our Lord's ministry. A reformer directs his work and shapes his methods very largely according to the condition of the people amongst whom he is carrying on his reforms. His spirit will be the same in any age and under any circumstances, but his modes of work and his modes of speech will be determined by the amount of ignorance or knowledge, by the inheritance of ideas, and by the characters of the individuals to whom he addresses his message and among whom he renders his service. It is impossible for us to estimate accurately the character of Parnell, the leader of the Irish party, without knowing something about the

* Preached in Stockwell Baptist Church on Sunday evening, October 18th, 1891.

condition of Ireland at the time when he accepted the responsibilities of leadership. Macaulay takes care to introduce us to the bitternesses and to the antagonisms which existed in Parliament in order that he may help us to understand the character of William III., knowing well enough that unless we see the sphere in which William's work had to be performed, we can neither estimate him nor the work that he performed accurately. Wesley can only be comprehended with fairness and judged of with truth when we know what was the condition of the Church of England at the date when he commenced his great evangelical enterprise, and the reluctance which the reforming preacher showed to detach himself from that institution is one of the elements which must be accounted for in every estimate of him. So we must know something about the institutions which were shaping and moulding the life of Palestine in the day of Jesus Christ, in order to know Him and to estimate fairly the work which He did then, and the work which He is continuing amidst our institutions to-day.

Now you must know from your study of the New Testament that of all the institutions amongst which the Jews were living none was so central, none so fundamental, as that which is designated in the words, "the law and the prophets." More than the Magna Charta is to us, more than the Bill of Rights is to us, more than Parliament is to us, was the Law to the Jew. It was his central interest. It was ubiquitous. It met him speedily after his birth, and it attended him through all his earthly pilgrimage. It was with

him at his death, and if he had any hope in that death he got it from that law. For him to know the Law was to be in possession of the highest privilege in this life and to have, according to the testimony of Hillel, some good hope about the life which was to come. But for him to be ignorant of the Law was to be under the heaviest curse possible to men. "This people, knowing not the law, are cursed." The man who uttered the Law's message as the Pharisees of the time understood it was orthodox, was sound in the faith, and might be trusted anywhere and everywhere. The man who said a word that was in collision with the Law—well, Gehenna was too good for him; such was the thought of the scribes and Pharisees of the days of Jesus Christ. Revelation was in that law; the idea of God, the theology which the Jew possessed he derived from the Law. The rubrics were in the same Law. It was his prayer-book, the means by which he directed himself in worship, regulated the number of his sacrifices and the significance of his various offerings. Not only into theological thought and public worship, but into the private life of the man the Law came, for it was his private code, determining the standard by which he judged himself and by which he judged his fellows. The statutes which regulated his conception of vice and of crime were found in the same Law. Indeed, theology and worship, private and public life—all these were comprised in the Law. The Law was the one great central institution in the days of Jesus Christ, the greatest force which was operative upon the life of the people to whom Jesus was speaking

His word of salvation. Therefore you are not surprised that in the teaching of the Saviour there should be abundant reference to the Law, and that one of His great solicitudes should be to define with crystalline clearness the relation which He took towards the Law, to emancipate His hearers from the mistakes into which they fell with regard to that relation, and so to open their minds to the access of the truth which He had to communicate to them about the Law as it was in the past, about it as it should be in the future.

Now there were two great mistakes into which the hearers of Jesus Christ were constantly falling with respect to the attitude which Jesus took towards the Law. And these two mistakes were not only the property of the common people, but they infected His disciples, and no teacher can afford to neglect the misconceptions which his hearers have concerning him and his message, those misconceptions blocking the way to the entrance of the truth which he delivers. And when men malign their minister, when they misrepresent his relation to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they should remember that they are not injuring him —the chances are, they cannot injure him—but they injure the people who hear him and put those spectacles over their eyes which will prevent them from seeing the truth as truth as delivered by him. Therefore the Saviour was exceedingly anxious that He might emancipate His disciples from the errors of the day as to His attitude towards the Law, and there is something deeply pathetic in the words of Jesus, "Do not think that I am come to destroy the

Law. Dismiss that falsehood from your minds. Free yourselves from the conception that I am here as a destroyer. I am come not to annul, but to build up, to complete, and to perfect."

The men of the day of Jesus Christ spoke of Him as though, forsooth, He, not being a conformist, must of necessity be a destroyer; because He did not echo the message which was given by the priests and by the scribes and Pharisees, they affirmed that He did not speak truth; since He did not belong to their Church, that He did not belong to God's Church. And they therefore represented Him as one who was destroying the best forces of the day, a firebrand, consuming in His vanity and through His selfishness that sacred law which was invested with so much power from the past, and which still had throbbing in it the very heart and mind of God; whereas Jesus Christ Himself, instead of being the firebrand they thought Him, was as the glorious summer fulness which had come for the purpose of ripening into harvest all the golden and gracious promise of the spring.

It was the old story of the battle between the Tory and the Liberal, between the Conservative and the Radical, between the man of yesterday and the man of to-morrow. It is an eternal fight, is this. The man of yesterday is for order, and opposes the slightest infraction of order; the man of to-morrow is for progress, and he says, "Let us break order for a moment, that we may secure better order a little further on." The man of yesterday says, "Except ye, every one of you, be circumcised according to the law of Moses,

ye cannot enter into the kingdom"; the man of to-morrow says, "God hath also granted unto the Gentiles repentance unto life." The man of yesterday finds himself confronted by the traditions, by the inherited ideas and forces, of the past; the man of to-morrow is pledged to accept the position of enmity and do his work with trust in the God who is before him, and who is leading him forward. Hence, as we look back upon the past, we have to say, with Lowell,—

"By the light of burning heretics Christ's bleeding feet I track,
Toiling up new Calvaries ever with the cross that turns not back,
And these mounts of anguish number how each generation learned
One new word of that grand *Credo* which in prophet hearts has burned
Since the first man stood, God-conquered, with his face to heaven upturned."

"I am not come to destroy." Jesus in the strongest language disavowed any destructive purpose, and asserted that His great business was to fill out the Law as the day fills out the dawn, as the man grown to maturity fills out all the promise of the yearning of the child.

But there was a second mistake current in the days of Jesus Christ concerning His attitude towards the Law. Men thought that He relaxed the bonds of obligation, that He detached men from the claims of duty and set them free, so that in unbridled licence they might serve their own passions and minister to their own lusts. There were two things about the speech and about the action of Jesus which led to this mistake. First, there was the singular reticence of Jesus about the ritualistic part of the Law. When we think of the place which circumcision occupied as the

means by which every young Jew was introduced to the privileges and to the honours of Judaism, and that Jesus never said a word about it, not a single sentence, we are not surprised that the Pharisees, who prided themselves so much upon this rite, which distinguished them from other peoples, should have thought this anti-ritualist, this great anti-ritualist, was putting a premium upon wrong, upon the neglect of duty, forgetfulness of and indifference to the sanctuary and the claims of God over the worship and over the love of men.

Moreover, this Christ, who was so pronounced an anti-ritualist, was Himself standing at the gate of the kingdom of heaven and opening it wide for the harlot, for the publican, for the sinner. He took men straight away from the letter of the Law to its spirit, and He added to that its revelation of the magnanimity, of the great-heartedness, of God. And as the Pharisees heard Him speak the beatitudes, describing how the poor had the kingdom, how the pure-hearted saw the vision of God, how those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness were satisfied, and saw that they were left outside, that the worst people in Palestine got God's heartiest grip, that He went to their houses and feasted with them, they said, "This man is a sinner himself; he must be, or he would not fraternise with wrong-doing and wrong-doers in this way and proclaim the mercy of God to men who are so notoriously wrong." It has been the constant malediction of men for reformers, for those who have discerned the new era and have had a message for the new era. The early Christians found no accusation so difficult to face as that they were the victims of immorality; and

to-day our missionaries in China and our converts in China have no trouble so heavy to carry on their hearts as that the Chinese say of them that their new religion is itself a relaxation of the bands of moral obligation. Proclaiming the free mercy of God in the way Christianity does, it has been subjected perpetually to this allegation of putting a premium upon wrong-doing.

Why, some of you have fallen into the same mistake. When you have heard the sacrifice of Jesus Christ presented as nothing less than the proclamation of a free pardon for bad men, you have said, "Surely this means the patronage of wickedness; it is giving the opportunity to wrong-doers to live precisely as they like," and you will hear in Secularist halls to-day the very same accusation brought against Christianity that was brought against Christ. And yet for us who know God's method, into whose hearts God's Gospel has come as a living power—there is no truth that is so true to us as that the very freeness of God's pardon was the inspiration of our life for holiness; that accepting God's forgiveness without any other condition than that of opening our heart for its blessed entrance filled us forthwith with a passion for righteousness and with a hatred for ourselves, for every mean and every guilty and every wrong act to which we are prone. Yes, Christ Jesus came to call, not the righteous, but to call sinners. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses," and though His work looked like the destruction of the Law, it was the quickest and best way of securing its complete fulfilment.

But Jesus, besides correcting these two mistakes, goes on to assert that He fulfils the Law and the Prophets. There are three points I should like you to look at as illustrative of the way in which Jesus Christ fulfils the Law. You will observe that as the Saviour speaks He bases Himself upon the solid and irremovable granite of reason. "Do not think that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." The victory of the eternal purpose, the triumph of God Himself, is the assertion which Jesus Christ makes as proof that He Himself has come to fulfil God's law, and not to destroy it. Even the smallest points of the Divine revelation shall not pass away, but shall receive their verification in His life, and the faintest parts of the ideal which the Law sketches shall be actualised first in the life of Christ and next in the life of all those who follow Him. Truth is the one thing constant amid all the variations of human experiences. God's truth endureth to all generations. The forms in which it finds expression may change from century to century, but the Truth Himself lives, for it is God Himself. Truth is personalised as God, and truth as truth is simply God verbal, God in speech, and it partakes therefore of His eternity. It cannot fail. The thought of His heart, as the Old Testament says, stands fast, and His purpose endures to all generations. Just as two and two are four in Hebrew, in Greek, in English, anywhere, everywhere, so truth is truth anywhere and everywhere, and it cannot fail.

Evolution is life's law, righteousness is life's goal, truth is life's basis, and on that basis human life rests, and moving by the impulse of the Divine Spirit, marches towards that eternal goal of righteousness. God is always in front of us, then, and from the Law as a letter Christ lifts His hearers to the God who is Himself the Law, and who through prophet and through legislator has spoken it for the guidance of the sons of men. Jesus, by lifting men from the letter of the Law to the God who gives it and asserting its irreversible victory, is Himself the filling out of the great purpose for which the Law was given.

But you note, do you not, that Jesus Christ does not simply speak in these words of the Law, but He adds on the words "or the prophets"? Now that is a habit of Jesus, and though it seems to be a little thing, it is most important. It is distinctive of Christ as contrasted with the Pharisees. When they speak they forget the Prophets. When Christ speaks He never forgets them. Go through your Testament, look at the successive references which you can discover of Christ's speech about the Old Testament, and you will see He never drops out of sight the Prophets. Why? What is the ground of this? It is discoverable in this fact: the prophet is a man; the Law is a book. The prophet is a soul, and souls are akin to God and can breathe His breath, and therefore Jesus Christ does not permit us to think of the Law apart from the soul through which the Law comes; but He carries us to Moses himself, a prophet as well as a legislator, and so makes us see that the real thing in inspiration is not the book, but the man

whose soul is filled with the breath of God, and who consequently speaks such things as are profitable for doctrine, for teaching, for discipline, for education, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Therefore, when Jesus has brought us to the prophet as mediating law, His summary of the Law is one which at once is comprehensible and practicable for each of us. On two occasions, and in response to questions, Jesus Christ brings out the very essence, the complete inwardness, of the whole revelation of God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself; on these two hang all the law and the prophets." "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, that do ye also unto them." On this, says Jesus Christ, hang all the Law and the Prophets. Thus the Saviour takes us first of all to God, who is above the Law, then right into the heart and centre of the Law as living in the soul of the prophet and finding its expression in these two things: love to God and self-sacrificing service to our neighbour. So Christ fills out the programme of the Law, makes clear to our vision the entire trend and drift of the ancient revelation, so that he who runs may read and as he reads may understand.

But the third way in which Jesus fulfils the Law is in presenting in Himself the actual and perfect obedience to those two great commands. In Jesus Christ you have a love so whole-souled, so whole-minded, so complete, that it is His meat to do the will of His

Father who sent Him and to finish His work ; and in that same Christ you have the love of His neighbour so self-sacrificing that for His neighbour He goes through the agonies of Gethsemane and the death on the Cross. So Christ in Himself is an example of immediate and perfect obedience to the Law as it is interpreted by the whole of the Prophets. And then He adds to that this : that, while He has given the last obedience to the Law, He is creating a new era in which all the vital of the old shall be retained in the new economy, and the fresh force which has been made shall have free play for the regeneration of the world.

Go then, I beseech you, in and through your Old Testament, and ask what it is that you find there ; and then appeal to Christ as to whether He has or has not filled it out. Is it here you find the idea of God, the Eternal, delighting in mercy, plenteous in redemption ? In Christ the revelation is full-orbed, unstained, and the rays of it bring not only light, but healing to the nations. Is there sacrifice in the Old Testament, the means by which man expresses his hunger for pardon, his desire to be set right with God ? He is the Sacrifice for our sins, for He bare our sins in His own body upon the tree, so that He, the Just One, might bring us, the unjust, to His Father's heart and to conformity to His Father's character. Is there in the Old Testament a great hope, an anticipation that all flesh shall see the salvation of God ? That hope is realised in full and marvellous fruition as the missionaries of Jesus go from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum preaching the unsearchable riches of

Jesus' salvation. There is not a point of promise nor an item of programme in the Law and the Prophets which is not completely fulfilled in Christ Jesus.

And since He is the Eternal Christ, my practical point is this : that Jesus is doing for our institutions to-day the same that He did for this great formative institution of the Law in the days when He was upon the earth. Think of your life for a moment or two. What are the forces that mould it? Man is infinitely plastic. Through him, all through him, he is mouldable. And what are the forces that come and play about him from childhood right away to old age? First of all, he is taken into the home; then he passes into school; from the institution or the school he goes to a profession or to business ; out from this he passes to the larger civic life, to the larger national life, and on through these to the great human life, the life of humanity, and he should find his place in that ideal institution the Church. These institutions make us. Analyse how you have been put together, mind, soul, will, character, and you will find these institutions touching you at every point, so that you are what these institutions were. Start life in a bad home down in the slums, let the first influences that begin their touch upon you be of the evil kind, and what sort of a manhood do you anticipate? These determine to a large extent the evil that is in the world, and so the homes make the city, make the nation.

Now Jesus Christ does not come to destroy any of these great formative forces. He comes to fulfil them. He enters into the home, becomes a Child, sanctifies child-life by Himself sharing it, and then gives us the

central idea of the home when He guards each particular child as it enters into the home with the assertion, "Of such is"—*is*—"the kingdom of heaven." Do not save that text for the memorial card. Put it there when God comes into your house and takes the darling babe away from you. Put it there, but do not restrict it to the memorial card. Jesus Christ said it of children that He folded in His arms and on whom He put His hands of blessing; and that thought of His, that radiant and brilliant idea, guards each little child as it comes into our home and bids us approach it as we would approach God, with a reverence that befits a Divine presence, with the awe with which our souls are bathed as we come into God's sanctuary. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." And having thus fulfilled by revelation the Divine idea of the home, He tells us that the loving spirit of self-sacrifice in father, mother, and child is the law on which the happiness and prosperity of the home rest. Behold Jesus not destroying, but fulfilling, the great purpose of this fundamental and central institution, the home.

Christ was a citizen, and the interests of the city were dear to Him. One of the Gospels restricts itself almost entirely to picturing for us the civic, the social Christ. Matthew's pictures of Jesus are pictures of Jesus building a kingdom and starting a new community. From the first catalogue that he gives us of the ancestors of Christ on to his last citation from Christ's speeches, the king is before us, the ruler of states and of cities; and in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, often quoted simply as though it had

reference to the eternal hell for the individual, Jesus Christ gives the law upon which the prosperity of nations depends. Self-sacrifice for, and chivalrous devotion to, the least, the poorest, the most abject, the most criminal, members of the national life is the law of a nation's prosperity. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me," Christ says when the nations are gathered before Him, and He utters a great law, and He is telling us Britishers that if we are hard towards our subject races, if we are cruel towards the African population as it comes under our sway, if we deny to the people of India the rights which we claim for ourselves, we shall go into everlasting punishment, we shall lose our place as a nation; and in obedience to that great law, faithfully following it, we shall secure a larger place for the Anglo-Saxon race, and as our obedience is perfect, so will our sovereignty over the spiritual life of the world become complete. On this hangs the law of national development and national progress.

I will not advert to other societies, save that which comes so brightly, vividly, before our thought to-day: the Christian Church. Jesus comes for the purpose of fulfilling it. The Church is older than Pentecost. It is in the Old Testament as well as in the New, and Christ takes up the conception of a society of men gathered together for the purpose of worshipping God, loving God, obeying God, and carries it forward to its perfectest realisation. The great principle which Jesus Christ gives—and it is one that the Churches often forget—as the very law of life is, if a man has offended you, you are to forgive him—how many

times? how many times? "Well, once, if he tells the whole story of his sin." Nay, nay, nay; Jesus Christ's law, on which the prosperity of His Church hangs, is that you shall forgive him seventy times seven, and your forgivingness shall be supreme. That is the central rule of Christian society. You know how we have broken it and how we have discredited ourselves as Christians and discredited the Christianity we profess by breaking it. O Lord, have mercy upon us; and incline our hearts to keep that law. Could we only keep that fully, our Churches would be the asylums of the distressed and the troubled, the nurses of the sick and afflicted, the comforters of the poor, the saviours of the criminal. They would be the body of Christ, breathing His spirit of forgivingness, never cherishing for even a moment any other spirit, but saying even when the enemy is ready to thrust the spear into the side, "Father, forgive him; he does not know what he is doing."

You belong to a Christian society. That is this ideal which Jesus Christ is perfecting, fulfilling. See that you come into such blessed sympathy with His purpose, see that you so thoroughly obey His great law, that men knowing of you shall be constrained to say, "This people shall be my people, and their God shall be my God; I will go with them, for I see that the Lord Himself is with them in the fulness of His pardon and in the radiance of His eternal righteousness."

Young men, believe in Christ. He is not the foe of the new. In Him and by Him all the problems of the present are solved. He has a most hospitable mind,

and welcomes all that is true, even though it be new, and holds fast all that is old that is still true. Working with Him, you may secure the most true and abiding order, the most real and complete progress. Give your heart, your mind, your loyalty, to Christ; and you have in Him the Interpreter of the past and the Leader who will one day make all things new. Amen.

SPIRITUAL IDEALS AND THE CONDITIONS OF THEIR ATTAINMENT.

By the Rev. S. A. Tipple.*

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," etc.—Heb. x. 19—24.

IT is not my purpose to expound this passage, nor to meddle with any theological doctrine that may be presented in it or referred to by the writer. There is generally something deeper than doctrine and truer indeed, more universally and eternally true, which we may, if we choose, find underlying it or embedded in it. And this something I would catch and disengage here for brief meditation, laying hold of the spirit rather than the letter of the Apostle's exhortation, upon the truths which he embodies or evolves rather than upon the forms in which they are conveyed or the particular application made. He was counselling his readers, you observe, with regard to some ideal which he and they had before them, some ideal to be reached after and advanced toward, with regard to an attainment to which he and they were desirous of drawing near, a holy place, as he phrases it, which they were

* Preached in the Baptist Church, Upper Norwood, on Sunday morning, November 1st, 1891.

desirous of entering into, and which was not to be gained without careful devices, the pursuit of which required painstaking effort, painstaking self-management and self-regulation. There was a character, a life, which they felt themselves called to realise, a fulness of love and abounding in good work which he wanted them to exemplify. And the passage contains his advice as to the course they should pursue and the methods they should follow with a view thereto. Let us look at the implicit form, the fundamental idea, of his words, and see the essence of his meaning.

Thus, then, we are struck by reflecting upon the great High-priest presiding over the house of God, the emboldening influences provided for them in the blood of Jesus, and the new and living way opened by Him through the veil, that is to say His flesh. Whatever he may specifically have intended and alluded to in such language, he was really recommending reflection upon their advantages—upon what they enjoyed in favour of their aspiration for things above them, and what there was in their position, in their condition and circumstances, to be gratefully acknowledged as precious and helpful. This is just what is meant, of course, discerning, to begin with, the advantages with which you are blessed in relation to your moral aim : a High-priest's ministry of guidance and sympathy ; the courage-inspiring blood of Jesus ; the upward track made and beaten by His blessing.

Now it is as well, when we are concerning ourselves about our advantages in connection with what we are seeking to become or acquire, to be looking round on them and counting their number, how many or how

few—how many or how few perhaps in comparison with those of others. We may do this either to enervating despondency of their meagreness, or to equally enervating complacency of their abundance. But there are times when it is well to survey our advantages and to enumerate and ponder them, when, for instance, with reference to our cherished aims and aspirations, we may be thinking ourselves unfortunately placed and be ready to complain that everything is against us, or some more fortunate placing of others may have stirred our discontent and envy; then may we usefully search them out and tell them in order before us side by side with adverse influences. Such inquiry and examination will often cheer and invigorate by revealing what has not previously been recognised and showing us how much more we have to be thankful for than we had thought, how still it is in our environment the impeding elements by which we are surrounded that occasionally impress us. In view of these we lose heart, become dispirited, despair of success, and are like to falter and flag in endeavouring so to excuse the unwarrantable poorness of our work, the little that is accomplished. Then it is good to turn and note what we have on the other side upon which to congratulate ourselves, what there is on the other side to serve and help if we will but accept and acknowledge its own limit and feel that we are rather better on the whole than we had supposed, that springs bubble in the desert which we had overlooked, we perhaps who had been saying, "Dolorously conditioned as I am, what can be expected of me? For me what fine growth or high attainment is possible?"

None are ever without their special advantages, special advantages to be prized, however void of them their lot may seem. We may find some now and again with quiet observance in things that had seemed the reverse, in the very difficulties and obstacles that had been deprecated. Have we not found in looking back that what at the time appeared quite the contrary is seen now to have contributed to our discipline; in the frowning obstacle, seen now to have brought help or the means of discovery, or evoking in us latent powers; in a cruel disappointment, seen now to have left us chastened, wholesomely chastened, as but for it we had not been? Life holds for us at its very barest and blackest more of golden opportunity, more in aid of our very best nurture, than we dream until we have cleared our eyes and arranged our hearts to descry. If our path is strewed with devilish gins and snares it is strewn also with Divine succours. If there are people about us in unavoidable contact with whom we are liable to be hindered, contact with whom leaves us poorer, weaker, further from the kingdom of heaven, there are people to whom we may resort for stimulus, whose company acts upon us as a spiritual tonic. If we are exposed to pernicious atmospheres, atmospheres that tend to distemper and corrupt, still the heavenly airs play over us, by which, pausing to inhale, we may cleanse and refresh ourselves. Are there not often, in the system of nature, provisions for our advantage which we stupidly neglect and ignore, which we actually neutralise by our weakness and folly, refusing to take the benefit of them? Might we not often make things far more in favour of our highest growth

and culture than they are if we were not so timid, so bound by convention, if we were less afraid to choose our own course and our own manner of living? Yes, advantages lie at our doors which we are not wise enough to discern or not brave enough to embrace.

Having reminded his readers of their advantages, the writer next directs them to be full of faith and to hold fast the profession of it, so that it should not waver. "Be full of faith," he says, "with regard to your ideal, with regard to the perfect attainment to which you are aspiring. Believe further that the glory which you see afar off and would fain reach you are meant and destined to reach. Believe firmly that your vision and yearning are the echo within you of a Divine purpose concerning you which must needs be eventually fulfilled, that your beautiful dreams are not mere empty dreams, but foreshadowings and prophecies of coming realities. Cling steadfastly to the hope you have avowed now; grasp it tightly against all that would snatch it from you; repeat it to yourselves persistently. Amid all the mocking noises and murmurings, keep intact lofty faith and lofty hope."

It is by these, indeed, that all great things are done —never without them. It is by these that men are strong to master, to win the victory that overcomes the world and conquers heights otherwise unscalable. Doubt is ever a feeble thing. If any "subdued kingdoms, . . . waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens," it is because they had believed deeply, nursed in their breast convictions and expectations which none could shake or disturb. To keep always faith and hope is just the difficulty.

"How are we to do it?" the writer's friends might have asked, "for whatever our inward assurance, at times it fails us; we sink below: we sink to a comparatively dark and cheerless mood. There are tides of it within us, and then presently the mournful ebb of the tide. We are apt to lose by the weight of the faith and the hope that have possessed us. Can you show us the secret of providing for their maintenance?" And he offers them two counsels in aid thereof, two counsels attention to which would contribute at least to their maintenance: "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water, so we should draw near with continued fulness of faith and hold fast the fashion of our hope."

The evil conscience is a conscience burdened with a sense of evil doubt, than which nothing tends more to disable the hoping and believing, and freedom from which should be sought and may be secured in two ways, namely, by constant care to be true to ourselves, true in habitual aim and effort to our own best thought, however we may fail in execution, and by determining at the same time not to be haunted with the remembrance of past follies and sins, by refusing to dwell on them with vexing remorse and regret, to allow them to plague or frighten us. Confidence in the ultimate triumph of the good, in a great evolutionary process the issues of which shall be realised in the high destiny of humanity, is incompatible with repeated disloyalty in aim and effort to our own best thought. To believe and anticipate this thus eagerly is impossible if we are blinded by our intimateness and cannot see afar off the glory; and they who linger, as

some do, among self-accusing recollections of their feelings and misdeeds, who suffer the memory of these to cleave to them torturingly, who are ever looking back in futile self-reproval upon wrong-doings that are not to be undone, and that have become, as one has said, part of the history of God's universe—they dim themselves for perceiving and dull and weaken themselves for aspiring to the heights that are to be scaled, and from them the Divine rosy glow on the horizon is hidden. If you would keep noble faith and hope, keep yourselves sprinkled in these two senses from an evil conscience. Beware of any slothful falseness to your ideal, to the spirit in you, and forget the ugly things of fault and transgression that are behind.

But the writer has another counsel yet: "Having our bodies washed with pure water." Here, you see, is the sacramental efficacy of baptism, the inwardly penetrating virtue of the outward rite, or, in other words, of due bodily observance, of the due ordering of the bodily habit and condition, which is of more importance with regard to spiritual health and tone than many are apt to recognise—at all events, to recognise practically. Such spiritual health and tone we may aid greatly through the flesh, if we will, even as we may hinder it. Let us not say, "Spite of this flesh, to-day I strive," as the bard sings; but let us cry, "All good things are ours, nor soul helps flesh more now than flesh helps soul." The soul may at all events be helped by it materially. Its guarded footsteps with careful management contribute unto the soul's life and buoyancy.

There are bodily habits which infallibly leave behind

them debility, disease, and emptiness, and which should be avoided like poisons if we would escape such ; and there are bodily habits which are conducive to strong mood and fineness of vision. What men most need occasionally, perhaps frequently, for some inner ripening or healing is, not some more prayer, but some more food or physical exercise ; not more devout contemplation, but more bed. Some bodily distemper or irregularity is the secret, the whole secret, of that continual exclusion from what they are praying or aspiring to become. With the removal of that their prayer will be straightway answered. They remain dull, miserable, apprehensive, and despairing, because of want of attention to the body. The cure of a troublesome mental infirmity may often be greatly promoted by beginning with the body, not with the mind, or at least by some training of it, some mere manipulation of it in conjunction with the direct effort against the mental infirmity. Precipitate men, according to a great German physician, should accustom themselves for their cure to write and to walk slowly. The irresolute should endeavour to perform their ordinary daily acts with great rapidity. The gloomy, romantic dreamer should force himself to practise stepping with head erect, looking others straight in the face, and speaking unto them with a loud distinct tone of voice. It may seem incredible, says the physician, but I may affirm from personal experience that such efforts may exercise a great salutary influence upon the mind. With a view to the furtherance of the soul, look well to the ways and manners of the body. Be dainty ; be scrupulous ; give heed to its order and purity.

And to our perfecting the Apostle says in effect, "While caring for the heart, care for the spirit; while mindful of the spirit, be mindful also of the form: both are important." The outward should be determined by the inward, but the inward is none the less affected by the outward. Seek to be beautiful within you, in the depths of you; but that you may, or in assistance thereof, study to be beautiful upon the surface. Study to look your best as well as to be your best. Some worthy persons I know do themselves a great injustice, and at the same time miss a means of grace, because they do not look half so good as they are. There is more sweetness, more excellence, in them than they allow their aspect to show. Their hearts are sprinkled with a pure conscience, but their bodies are not washed with pure water. They should keep a better exterior, and this would silently react upon them to their own betterment and growth.

But all this self-attention with the object of drawing near to the ideal and entering into the holy place was not enough in the judgment of our writer, and would be likely indeed, he would doubtless have said, to defeat its own end unless qualified by other attention. And he closes with an injunction: "Let us consider one another to provoke to love and to good works." I am so glad he added that, or I could not have gone with him so far as I have done. I am so glad he added that, for we may be sure that no man's soul is to be perfected or cultured toward perfection by any amount of mere self-attention. However wise, and earnest, and devout, so long as one is intent upon his

own purification, he can never be purified, never be wholesomely purified. He must also be intent upon the purification of others, must desire to be among them a helpful stimulating influence, to assist in moving them on to nobler aims. And the more he feels himself called and bound, as his great business, to be provocative of good around him by due sympathy, and labour, and example, the more will the good be provoked in him. He, in fact, will never go far wrong. You need not trouble about him. He will never sink into spiritual decline, but will always be flourishing in his great heart and progressive in body and soul. "We can never truly know ourselves," Ruskin said once, "by looking into ourselves, but only by looking out of ourselves upon others, measuring our powers with theirs, comparing our necessities with theirs; and we can never truly cultivate ourselves except by giving ourselves to promote the cultivation of others." In solicitude of others, in entering generously into their conditions and needs, and trying to be of use, our own personal redemption is advanced, and the higher life in us quickened and sustained; love and good works are promoted among us by mutual consideration. Through the practice of mutual consideration shall each unit of the brotherhood grow Divine.

THE CRITICISM OF LIFE.

By the Rev. Canon Ainger.*

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, all is vanity."—Eccles. xii. 8.

IT is hardly strange that from the earliest times there should have been diversities of opinion as to the purpose and object of this book of Ecclesiastes, the last words of which are chosen for the morning lesson on this last Sunday of the Church's year. Its very authorship is obscure. Although it bears the name and is written as from the pen of the wise and luxurious King Solomon, there has always been the alternative theory that the book was written dramatically as representing the probable experiences and conclusions of a long life of splendour, leisure, and culture.

But the authorship is the least perplexing and important of the difficulties the book presents. With it the internal problems of the book are found to baffle us. What, taken as a whole, are we to consider its moral? What was the main lesson it was designed to teach? Was the preacher whose experiences are set forth meant to serve as a model to imitate or as a

* Preached in the Temple Church, London, on Sunday afternoon, November 22nd, 1891.

warning to avoid? For such a variety of character as appears in the utterances of the writer is almost without a precedent in so short a compass. Of course it is always more or less a truth that by isolating the utterances of a writer by extracting single passages and detaching them from their context we may make them appear to teach very different truths, sometimes even contrary ones. But it is not merely so here. In the book of Ecclesiastes we pass rapidly through different strata of thought and feeling. We pass from one temperature to another, from something all but of the earth, earthy, to something almost heavenly in its sense of beauty and goodness. At one moment we are listening to the confessions of one who had tried pleasure and knew it was vanity, and at another we are at the standpoint of the Stoic. Again, we seem very perilously near the scorn of the cynic. At one moment we seem to be listening to the hopeless resignation of the fatalist, and then again to the more hopeful resignation of the Christian. There is what the artists call a want of keeping about the confessions and conclusions of this writer. It is difficult to imagine a man passing so rapidly from one to another, or, stranger still, being in all these moods at once, combining so many different men in one single personality. But, my brethren, this should not surprise us if we thought more, still less be a stumbling-block to us in implying inconsistency in the character represented. It may be that the very inconsistency of the teaching is meant to read us most salutary lessons.

We know nothing about this man save what he

tells us himself. He is very confiding. He keeps, as far as we can see, nothing back. He has been, he tells us, an ardent and industrious student of all the knowledge of the time. "I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven. I have seen all works that are done under heaven, and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

The last phrase, you will remember, is the burden of the entire discourse. It appears at the very outset, it reappears from time to time in its course, and it forms my text. Notice the writer's final verdict. He is struggling throughout against his inability to read the mysteries of existence. He seems to be beating his head at times against the bars of his cage. And then at times, again, he is hushed and calm and sings even a quiet song of confidence—confidence that whatever else betides, and whatever mysteries are unsearchable, still it must be the best thing to do what is right. "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." Like the modern sceptic and sentimentalist whom in some respects he resembles, he sees that after all in trying to make conduct right there can be no danger of mistake, that godliness is a sure thing whatever else is unsure.

But, as I have just said, the man is struggling against the unknown. The writer is not satisfied about providence in which he feels he must believe; the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor favour to men of skill. Time and chance happen to all. That is to

say, I suppose, other things besides merit and ability, mere accidental conditions, affect and disturb the natural issue. The proper sequence of cause and effect is upset by accident. He cannot understand it, and it is this obviously that makes him what he is. It is the pervading colour of the book of Ecclesiastes. I suppose it is the prevailing colour of all similar teaching since. We can all of us, I suppose, recall teachers of our own time, teachers noble and high-minded in their estimate of duty and of the true dignity of man, and yet whose tone is always this of a lofty melancholy, the melancholy resignation to the inevitable. And this resignation and its accompanying sadness appeals to a wide discipleship, notably among the educated, those who have searched out all the secrets of earth and those all the traditions of whose childhood and youth have been such as to show them the duty of holiness and virtue. And whatever other gospel may seem to have been worn out, there are two on which they dwell: the gospel of work and the gospel of moral excellence. And on these they feel they can rely. The first of these the book lays down in terms which curiously remind us of a teacher of our own century: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might"; and the second gospel, as I have said, is, "Fear God and keep His commandments." Others we have known would confess no religion beyond this as resting on any trustworthy foundation.

The phrase used by one such eminent teacher, "the criticism of life," is very applicable to this book of Ecclesiastes. It is from end to end a criticism of life,

conducted by a critic who, having watched life's experiences, sums up and pronounces a verdict on it from the end of the life or from a period approaching the end. As to the verdict itself there is no difference between this critic and all those other critics of life whose writings constitute Holy Scripture. He holds his place among those companions by virtue of having arrived at the same conclusion as they, though by different paths of experience. That of course makes the value, the incalculable value, of such a book. It represents the testimony of those who have discovered the truth of the greatest acts of life, though they have arrived at it through failures and humiliations, and not through success and triumph. It is one of the many eternal blessings that we owe to the Bible that it records in so many different ways and affirms the testimony of the world to the things that are not of the world. We should thank God for having taught us once more that there is no rest or satisfaction for man in the things of sense.

But it is quite another question whether the process by which this truth is arrived at is either safe or sound for the spirit of man to go through. The criticism of life is a wholly different thing from the true use of life. It is no justification of a man's existence when at the end, when a balance has to be struck and a conclusion arrived at, that conclusion is that most of the life has been a mistake and therefore a failure. To have learned the facts about life, however true and however important, cannot make the life a beautiful, a sound, or a profitable thing. There is no retrospective virtue in being able to draw a sound moral.

The Preacher's final conclusion of the whole matter is a beacon light for other men if they are wise enough to profit by it. But how about this man? where does he stand?—the man who had spent his life not in making experiments upon pleasure, luxury, culture, but in doing the will of God to the best of his ability in letting his light shine before men and so keeping the world forward, be it ever so little, on the same path of increased goodness and power.

It is not the critics of life who help us most, not the men who stand aside, however blameless and amiable, with their hands, so to speak, upon the pulse of life, noticing, noting, and registering its operations and telling us at the end what is the net result of the whole requirement. It is not the critics of life that help us except as warnings. We want something else: we want the inspiration of example and sympathy and comradeship, we want contagious enthusiasm, not the careful analysis of criticism, if we are to be lifted out of a too natural melancholy and the unrest that is born of melancholy.

The book of Ecclesiastes, as I have said, fills a place of its own. It could not be spared in the economy of Scripture. We should be far poorer if the book did not stand where it does. It interprets vast fields of civilisation, of life, that nothing else could interpret so well. There are probably at this moment thousands who find that it holds the mirror to their own nature more completely than any other book of Scripture. They read themselves there both in the darker and the brighter experiences it recalls. It tells them of the experiments of life and of the criticism of life. It

tells of hopes, too, to be disappointed, of faiths checked by problems found unsolvable. It comes to the conclusion that to do one's duty is after all the best. Every one can find in the Bible what he looks for there, and if the modern devotee of culture wishes to find a harmonious epitaph on existence, he will find it in this book. But if he turns from this book to others to make up the volume of Holy Scripture, he will be aware that the growth of moral ideas, the diffusion of the truths that germinate, and spring, and grow, and bear fruit, is not entrusted to men of the type of him whose confessions make up this book. The work of the world is not done by the critics, however acute, subtle, and honestly reverent they may be. The work of the world, of life, is done by those whose talents and energies find their outlet in other things, quite other things.

It should be a useful task, my brethren, at this season or at any season when we are called to sum up the results of any past period, to consider this question and distinguish between the mere acquisition of moral experience and the expenditure of moral force. Comparing that unique book Ecclesiastes with those other writings that have been so much before us for some weeks past, the writings of the prophets, it might not be easy on the spur of the moment to pronounce on the essential points of difference between these men. But there is not one of us here, I am sure, who would not perceive that difference at a glance. Passing from one to the other, we pass through one atmosphere to a totally different one. The moral that each arrives at is indeed the same; the burden of the teaching of

all the prophets is no other than the conclusion of the whole matter summed up by Ecclesiastes: "Fear God and keep His commandments." That indeed they are all agreed upon as the motive of human life. Yet the Preacher has arrived at the truth as the final result of a long series of experiments; it is the conclusion of the whole matter. He has tasted life at every fountain, he has tried expedient after expedient and met with failure after failure, and has finally, as it were, got to the truth by exhaustive and eliminative process. The doing of God's will is left to him at last as the only course, the only satisfaction which is found in practice to leave no taste of bitterness after it.

But with the prophet—that is, with the mind of prophetic nature and inspiration—the conclusion of the whole matter was also the beginning of the whole matter, and out of the beginning sprang all his health and all his strength, that which distinguishes him in every utterance and every mood from the language and temper of Ecclesiastes, and that is the element of hopefulness. Yes, hope; it is this which, amid all the severity, all the prognostics of ill, that mark the prophet, marks him yet more emphatically. With the sweetness and pathos of Ecclesiastes, the net result is gentle stoicism, a gentle optimism, and yet there is little of strength, little of confidence, little of a forward-looking attitude, in the conclusions he arrives at. What I have called the contagion of enthusiasm is not to be caught from him. It is to be caught from the prophet. The prophet surely is no optimist. He never allows one to believe that God is aught else but a jealous God, and those that sow evil shall reap it ten and a

hundredfold. And yet in his very severity there is hope, and in his teaching is the trumpet note which summons men not in vain to act, turns them from the extremes of Ecclesiastes, that all ages, all pursuits, all learning, all pleasure, all expectations, are vanity. Wholesome indeed is this criticism of life which looks it over and finds it vanity and failure.

But turn from it to the prophets in their dealings with life. They do not pause to criticise these things. Their task is so different from that of criticism. They look forth from their prophetic citadels upon a world of rebellious and therefore perishing men, but they do not proceed to draw morals therefrom. Yet there is hopefulness in their tone. In the summons to fight there is the hope of victory, whereas the other is that of stoic fatalism. The prophet never cries, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." I do not think the men who are doing God's work in the world with the most keenness do dwell upon the vanity of all earthly things. Vanity—what does vanity mean? Emptiness, I suppose, emptiness and consequent disappointment. No doubt everything is empty and disappointing, everything, if we have expected it to give something which it was not in its power or nature to give. And this is just the confession, the melancholy confession, of the Preacher; all he says is, he expected to find complete satisfaction in things less than the highest, less than God, and was disappointed. Of course it is true.

But the man who has not spent his life in making these experiments has not so spoken. May we not say, with all reverence for this book which God has

allowed us to read, that the prophetic writers had something better to do than to lament or even complain of their failure? They were so full of the kingdom of God and of love for, and interest in, the poor human creatures around them, that they had little time or thought for their own criticisms of life and the steps by which they were delivered out of their mistakes and their lost illusions. They were so full of the necessity for pressing onward that they could not stand still to report progress and register results. St. Paul, you will find, counts everything as vanity and loss in comparison with the struggles after the likeness of Jesus Christ. But he regards all these things which Ecclesiastes mentions as precious, because there is nothing which may not be made an occasion, a vehicle, a leverage, for doing his Master's will and promoting His kingdom. And in this consideration, I suppose, must be our deliverance from the dangers of the time, when, especially to the thoughtful and the cultivated world, with the making of many books of which there is no end, the inducement seems to be to seek for an approximately correct estimate of what life can give and what it cannot and to repose upon that criticism as the final gain, as something of value, something which may be a substitute for the religion of less gifted persons when life is nearly over or past its prime. There is no satisfaction in being able to discern life's moral failure when we have wasted life in making experiments, the majority of which have turned out a failure, if we have thus isolated ourselves from the world wherein we have not done any good or even got any real

good. God gives us a stewardship, but will it be a satisfactory answer to Him, when He asks us for an account of that stewardship, that at the end of life we have been obliged to confess the truth of what He told us at the beginning, the truth we would not act upon until we had served every other kind of master and found them a failure?

I do not say—I am far from saying it—that this is an accurate account of the confession of the Preacher Ecclesiastes. We know too little about him to say that. But there can be few who would question that there is a religion passing current among us—the religion of fatalism—which marks out our measure of the knowledge of God, and says we can know no more of Him than this. But a religion like this is not found to have much missionary impulse. It is not one enthusiastic about itself, and therefore has not much to depend on for throwing itself upon the world. It lacks power because it lacks hope, and it lacks hope because, serene, pathetic, kindly, as it is, it is not touched with the prophetic fire; it has not learned the lesson of looking forward, as this day we are bidden to look forward, to turn our back upon the past, and hail the first glimmering of the Advent dawn.

JOB'S APPEAL FROM MAN TO GOD.

By the Rev. Professor Skinner.*

"For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."—Job xix. 25-26

WHEN we read these words in our English Bibles, with all the light of our Christian faith thrown back upon them, it does not perhaps readily occur to us that there should be any difficulty as to what Job meant by them. We all feel that the book of Job is full of difficulties, and learned men seem to feel those difficulties quite as much as plain readers of the Bible. There are subtle turns of thought and quick transitions in the argument, and strong vehement outbursts of passion on the part of Job himself, that seem to make it almost impossible for us to trace the real connection between the one part of it and the other, and to gather the lesson that the Spirit of God meant to teach us. But these verses do strike us at first sight as if they were very simple. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth"—what is that but the declaration of Job that he

* Preached in Marylebone Presbyterian Church on Sunday morning, December 13th, 1891.

believes in the second coming of Christ? Then when he goes on, "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God," is not that as plain and simple a declaration of the truth of the Resurrection as we can find anywhere in Scripture? It seems to us as if Job had here returned to his sane mind, as if the mists of doubt that wrapped round his soul cleared away for a moment, and he were revealed to us as a man standing with his foot upon the solid rock of revealed truth.

In reality, however, brethren, it is not so. So far from this being the easiest passage in the book, it is one of the most perplexing that we have to do with. You may satisfy yourselves about that if you consult your margins, especially in the Revised Version. You will find so many hints of other possible translations, and each one of these is a suggestion; and it is only a small number of the suggestions that have been thrown out, the suggestion of some commentator or another, to lighten the difficulty and to get at the real thought that was in the mind of Job. I am not going to trouble you with their discussion. It seems to be very clear that in this passage Job does rise to the thought of a future life, a life of blessedness in the presence of God. But it is equally certain that that is not an easy thought for him. It is new, and unfamiliar, and strange. It is a vision that breaks upon him for a moment and then disappears. If he could only have held it fast, if he could have planted his foot upon it, then his trouble had been gone, the mental trouble that was distressing him would have disappeared, and he would have been able to rest in

patience until that great vision came. But we find that, instead of that, he is plunged back almost immediately into his fears and his difficulties again. The clouds that had cleared away wrapped round his spirit, and doubts that should have been laid for ever at rest came back almost as powerfully as ever.

And therefore, if one wished to speak about the Christian doctrine of the Resurrection or the life of blessedness in heaven with God, one might find many clearer texts than this to speak about. What I wish to do to-day is to try and put together some lessons that are taught to us by the course of God's dealings with Job, not so much the lesson he learned as the way in which he was taught it, the strange way in which God led him to take in even as much as he was able to take in of the blessed truth, the way in which these thoughts about the future were made to dawn upon his mind.

First of all, let me ask you to notice that in this verse you have the patriarch making an appeal from the mercy of man to the mercy of God, an appeal from the sympathy of man to the sympathy of God. You all remember how this book opens. You remember that after the great succession of troubles that fell upon Job there was one great comfort of his life that seemed to be left to him, and that was his three friends. Job was a man who was to be congratulated upon the possession of such friends. They were friends of his own age and standing; they were religious men, men of very sincere, though perhaps of somewhat narrow, piety; and, more than that, they were wise, thoughtful, experienced men, accustomed

to trace the working of God in providence and to find the principles by which His dealings with men were regulated. They were men with whom it had been the pleasure in happier days of Job to converse upon the great mysteries of human life and destiny. And these men, when they heard of their friend's trouble, did not desert him. They were mindful of the claims of friendship. They knew that Job needed their help, and so they made an appointment, and rose up each man from his place, and came to see Job and to comfort him in his affliction, and sat with him there seven days and seven nights in silence, respecting the sacredness of his grief. And yet we know that these men, so good, so faithful, so promising, failed Job utterly in the hour of his trouble. He had to say that they were like a deceitful watercourse, which the travelling caravan in the desert hastens to in order that it may be refreshed with water, and finds that the water has disappeared. So they had been to him. He had waited for their coming, he had waited after they came for their speaking, and when they spoke, and when he was able to hear the thoughts that were in their hearts with regard to him, he found that they were miserable comforters, that they could give him no help.

And the one thing that Job wanted from them, and missed, was kindness, human sympathy. They brought him plenty of advice, plenty of philosophy, plenty of forcible arguments that they tried to fit on to his case, and they were very faithful to rebuke their friend when they thought that he was in a dangerous spiritual condition. They would strive to bring him back, and

very faithfully did they speak to him about what they supposed to be his sins. But they could not sympathise with him, and they would not try. They were bigoted men, somewhat pharisaic, determined that they would not let Job say a single word against their faith. So long as they sat silent, it was well; but when Job unloaded his burdened heart, and when he opened his mouth, in that terrible third chapter, to complain of his fate and to curse his day, these men felt their souls estranged from him. He had outraged their religious instincts. Such words were not fit to be spoken, and they could no longer feel themselves sympathetic towards the man who was capable of uttering them. And so Job's cup of misery was full when he found that the men to whom he looked for guidance and for the support of human friendship were failing him in his need.

Notice, it was not the arguments of these men that troubled Job. Those arguments of theirs he was able to take in the grasp of his strong common sense and shiver to atoms. It was their spirit, their demeanour, their utterly heartless attitude towards him, in that they could not take his word as an honest man that he was conscious of no sin against God, and that these difficulties, this trouble that had come upon him, were more of a mystery to himself than they were to them.

Now that enables us, I think, to understand the course that Job's thoughts take in this important chapter. We find near the beginning of it that Job is constrained once more to make a last despairing appeal to the hearts of his friends. It is very pathetic to think of this man, who had been hurling reproaches

and sarcasms against them, turning at last in his distress and abasing himself before them and beseeching them for pity: "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me. Why do ye persecute me as God? God is against me; He has set me up as the mark for His arrows; all His terrors are round about me. Why should ye, poor mortal men like myself, take the part of God? Can ye not speak one word of hope and encouragement to me?" And Job made his appeal in these pathetic words; but there was no response, no relenting was visible upon those stern hard countenances. He gets no answer; but he can read it in their face that he is thrown back once more, and they have rejected him again.

And then it is that Job touches the lowest depth of his despair. He is constrained to utter this impossible wish: that the words that he is speaking, the protestations of innocence that he has been making, could be recorded upon the rock in letters that would last for ever and go down to posterity to bear witness that a man had died protesting his innocence. He can find no listener upon earth; he has found no listener in heaven. Surely in the time to come, if the words could be preserved, they would at last be noticed, and Job's right would be acknowledged.

And it is just then, when he has touched this lowest depth of despair, that he comes to see how near he is to the fountain of all hope and consolation. Why should he wish this impossible wish? What good would it do him to have his words recorded and read by future generations? Ah! was it not this: that

deep in his heart, though he hardly knew it, there was a conviction of a day of witness somewhere else than upon earth, that these thoughts and words that had passed through his mind were all known to One? And that thought now breaks through his darkness, and he leaps up to meet it with this exclamation: "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." It is Job's appeal, I say, from the sympathy of man, which was refused, to the sympathy of God, which at last he dared to claim and to trust.

That is a solemn moment, brethren, in a man's experience when in some crisis of his history he is made to feel that the help of man is vain; when he has to wrestle with inward difficulties which he cannot disclose to a human being; or when he would fain seek for a drop of the water of human kindness and knows that it will be refused. It is easy for you to talk about turning to God and getting help and comfort, but it is not so easy to find it. How far away God seems compared with the touch of a human hand, the look of a human eye. How long it seems when we have to wait before we can drink in those consolations which are truly neither few nor small. It is only afterwards, after perhaps the worst of the pain has passed away, that we are able to realise that there was a truth in God's sympathy all along, and that we were being sustained by the inward power which came straight from Him. It is only afterwards that we see it and are able to say, "Truly we have found pity, and sympathy, and help from God." Sweet had it been for Job at that moment to have seen the tears

start into the eye of his friends, to have seen one of them stretch out his hand to grasp his fevered hand and say, "O Job, we believe thy word. We understand not thy faith nor God's dealings with thee, but we love thee, and we believe thee, and we take thy word that thou hast not sinned."

Yes, it would have been sweet at the time, but where would it have left him? Left him with the thought that man was more generous than God; that man could pity and acknowledge him when God cast him off. That would have been no advance. And I say it was well for Job, as sometimes it may be well for us, to be repulsed and driven back by those on earth whom we trust in order that we may be enabled, we may be driven, to throw ourselves upon His love which never fails, upon the infinite mercy and help of our Father who is in heaven.

Then, in the second place, notice that here Job is making an appeal from the God of providence to the God of his conscience. He had appealed from God to man in the first place, and then back again from man to God. But it is a different kind of God that he seeks after and finds now. It is not the God who seems to be fighting against him, but it is God in a new view of Him; a God with a human heart, so to speak; One who knows him, and acknowledges him, and bears witness to his integrity.

Let me try to explain that strange turn that his thoughts take. The God that Job had always believed in up to this time was the same kind of being that his friends were believing in still. That is to say, they believed in a God whose character could be clearly

read off from His providential dealings with men in this world. They had observed, those ancient saints —they had observed that upon the whole it was well with the righteous, and that the wicked was punished. They had observed that upon the whole men's destinies upon earth corresponded with their characters, and they said, "This is God's doing. God is a righteous God, who loveth righteousness; He will see to it that the righteous is never put to shame; He will see to it that the wicked never passes unpunished." And they carried out that theory, the friends did, very rigidly; and they said when a man was found to suffer extraordinary sufferings, and it seemed, too, the punishment of God, "That man is a sinner." If they were not able to point to any sin in his life they said, "Then he is a secret sinner and a hypocrite; there must be something that causes God to send this chastisement upon him, and if God does punish him, it must mean that the man is a great sinner."

Now that faith had been a very comfortable faith for Job to live on so long as things went well with him. It had been the strength and solace of his life. Conscience and experience bore an excellent testimony. He knew in his heart that he was a faithful and loyal servant of God; and he looked abroad over his possessions and his great position amongst the men of the East, and there he read the confirmation from God Himself that he was a God-pleasing man. Then his troubles came upon him, and when all the outward tokens of God's favour disappeared on one day, that faith completely broke down. It did not break down in the case of his friends, because they

said, "Our friend has been a great sinner; we never suspected it of him, but in his heart there has been secret sin, and he has been only professing to serve God." But Job's conscience rose up within him and testified that he had been true in all his dealings with God. He had been faithful to Him, he had not deserted Him, he had not put on religion as a cloak of covetousness, but truly and with all his heart he had striven to walk humbly with his God. Of course Job knew that he was a sinner, never denied that for a moment. He knew that he had sinned far more than he could count up; but of this he was certain: that he had not been untrue to God. It was not great sin that had called down these great punishments upon him.

And thus his experience and his conscience bore different testimonies. The one said that he was true to God, and that he was eager to know Him and to serve Him, and the other said that God had cast him off, that He would no longer acknowledge him as His servant, that He would send him down to death a dishonoured man and make it plain that he was not numbered amongst His people.

Now it was difficult for Job to understand this, and he wrestled with the problem most earnestly. And this is one of the things that we seem to find in the book: that he had before his mind at once two different ideas of God. He sees, on the one hand, the God of providence, the God who has set him up as a mark for His arrows, who has compassed him round like a great sea monster, and watched for his halting, and tripped up his feet as he walked;

but, on the other hand, he has always, now and then, before him, the thought of a different Person, God in a different light, the God who knows what is passing through his mind, to whom his conscience bears witness, and a Being who will bear witness to his conscience. Some of the most pathetic parts of the book are the passages in which Job tries to grasp that thought of God. Oh, he says, if he could only meet Him, if he could only speak to Him face to face! Surely God must know all, must be just, and He must be able to give an explanation of His strange dealings with Job. And what happens here? It is just that Job is able for the first time to throw himself unreservedly upon that God who is speaking to his heart. He had shrunk from God as He was dealing with him in providence, and now he sees all, he knows that He lives, and he dares to call Him "my Redeemer," and throws himself upon Him, beseeching Him that He will come to his help.

Now, brethren, that strange confusion between two different aspects of God is a thing that we sometimes have to count upon as well. It was a Christian poet who wrote those well-known words,—

> "Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
> But trust Him for His grace;
> Behind a frowning providence
> He hides a smiling face."

There is the same difficulty that Job had: the frowning providence, and the difficulty of catching the smiling face. And it comes home to any of us still when troubles come thick and fast upon us, and they are said never to come singly. When

troubles come upon us it is hard indeed for any of us to resist the first impression that all is over, that He is deserting us, and that He has taken away from us the light of His countenance. We are not so very much ahead of the Old Testament saints in that respect, and the providence that seems to frown upon our lives, God cutting us off from His presence, sending trouble upon us, not sustaining us inwardly—that hides from us the God in whom we trust. The Father's face behind the cloud—it is hard for us to catch it. And it may help us as we read the experience of this much-tried saint of God when we find that he too had to work his way through that same difficulty and to penetrate through all the appearances of life to the face of his Father and his Redeemer above.

Then, very shortly, notice this: that there is most undoubtedly here Job's appeal from the present to the future, from his present experience to the future that must come. For, after all, as Job would have said to himself, this horrid confusion and contradiction must come to an end. There are not two Gods. The God who deals with me so harshly in providence and the God who speaks to me in my heart are one Being, and He must make His ways plain; He must reveal Himself, and declare Himself to be upon my side. Where that will take place, or how, or in what state of being, whether in the body or out of the body, Job could not have told; but somehow and somewhere in the future God will be seen, God will vindicate his case, and Job will be there to see Him.

And that, brethren, is immortality as it came to Job, the perfect, blessed life, the vision of God, God as He is, God as He reveals Himself in Jesus Christ His Son. To see Him as He is, with no earth-born clouds to obscure His face—that is immortality for you and for me, as it was for Job.

Now perhaps there are two lessons—with which I may shortly close—two lessons that follow from a consideration of all this strange path through which God led Job.

In the first place, notice how insensible a man may be of the real benefit that he is getting from God's dealings with him. The great problem that vexed the mind of Job—and also of his friends to a less degree—the great problem was, "What is the meaning of those troubles that have come upon Job?" Job could not answer it; the friends tried to answer it in various ways; but Job was able to show, with regard to one explanation after another, that it did not fit the case. He himself had no explanation to give. He had passed through it all, and to the very end he could not have told in what way he was better or what God had meant by it all. But we can see it. As we look back upon the history and we read the book, we can see in what way Job was a gainer by his discipline. And we find it in these verses if we find it in any part of the book. It was just this: that he had learned a new view of God. He had learned a great new truth. He had not perhaps been able to grasp it as fully as he would afterwards, but it had dawned upon him, this thought of God as a Father and a God who would reveal Himself more fully in a future life; and

the words that were wrung from him in that hour of his deepest trouble were put here for the admonition of all the ages; and saints of God who came after him, and followed sympathetically his history and his words, saw there a new light, a light that was strange to them, as it was to him, a light upon the far-distant horizon that cheered their souls through those dark ages that were to elapse until the coming of Christ. The dim and uncertain light led them on till at last the Sun of righteousness came, bringing life and immortality to light.

Now, brethren, so it will be generally with you and me if God should call us to pass through severe mental trouble. We are apt to begin asking ourselves, "Now what is the lesson that God means me to learn from this?" In many cases you will not find it until afterwards. You cannot tell, you do not see, what God is meaning with you. It is only after the trouble perhaps has gone away, and you are able to see that your life is purer and lived upon a higher level, that you have a truer and stronger vision of God than you had before, that you walk more closely with Him and feel more familiar with Him. It is only when you trace that back and see that somehow it grew out of the trouble that cost you so much perplexity—it is then that you see what God meant and how you have been the better.

And the second lesson is this, an exceedingly simple one, but it lies at the bottom of all true religion, and that is, trust in God—absolute, unbounded trust in God. When you read this book you find that Job is guilty of many wild and unjustifiable utterances with

regard to God. He confessed himself that his words were wild, and to his friends they seemed like blasphemy. He was no traitor; he could not weigh his words; he was not like the friends sitting at their ease discussing a question that was not theirs, able to trim their words and keep everything proper and correct. He could not do that, and he did transgress the limits of propriety in speaking about God. But when you come to the end of the book you find this remarkable fact: that, in spite of all the vehemence of his language, Job has from God this testimony: that he had spoken concerning God the thing that was right, as his friends had not. Is it not a marvellous thing that God should so completely disown those men who had tried to speak smooth things to him, and commend His servant Job, who had said many wild and unwarrantable things concerning Him? But the reason of it was just this: that Job had spoken what he felt, and, in spite of all the hard things he had spoken, he had dared to believe in God, dared to trust Him, dared to speak of Him as upon his side, because he knew that he was faithful to Him. He had blamed God for his own doings, but there was that in his heart which had gained God's approval.

And if these lessons are true for every one, they are most specially true for those that have to pass through suffering. You, my brother, may shrink from putting your own small trials alongside of those of Job; they would be utterly insignificant if you were to speak of them in public; you hardly dare to speak of them to your bosom friends. But perhaps they are real enough to you for all that; they have had a great effect upon

your life ; they have made you seek for a better and truer foundation for your religion. Your old comfortable view of life is broken up ; all that you knew about God and all that you knew about yourself has gone asunder ; and you are cast, as it were, upon an infinite ocean, and you have nothing but the stars for your guide. What are you to do in that case? Why, I say, you are to trust in God and believe that He is better than the best that you have ever dared to conceive of Him as being, and I say that even if your doubt should go so low as to lead you to doubt whether there is a God at all, still trust in Him. You have still some idea of what you would like God to be. Believe that He will be all that, and more than that, and better than that. Trust to the end ; trust absolutely and infinitely that God is, and that God is good, and will show Himself to be good to you. And if you live in that attitude be sure that at length to you there will come, as there came to Job, a vision of the true God, the only true God, whom to know is life eternal. You shall see Him, see Him perhaps dimly upon this earth, but see Him so clearly that you shall get a conviction that He is your God for ever and ever, and that your life, your eternal life, will be spent in His presence.

THE CONSTRAINING LOVE OF CHRIST.

By the Rev. Prebendary Eyton, M.A.*

"For the love of Christ constraineth us."—2 Cor. v. 14.

EMPHATICALLY I say that in these words St. Paul lets you into the secret of his life. Before his conversion and after his conversion St. Paul seems, when we think of it, to be such a different man that we want some sort of account of so great a change. Just think of the contrast for a minute. Before his conversion he was a man full of energy, full of sincerity: but he was narrow; he was prejudiced; he was a bigot. The one employment of his life was the persecution of other people for the opinions which they held and for the way that they acted upon them. The one object of his life was to exterminate what he regarded as an infatuated sect, a sect that had gathered round the name of One whom he regarded as a dead man, the Lord Jesus Christ. And bigots, you know, not only then, but now, often put other people to shame in this way by the energy of their efforts. The difficulty is very often to get people who have wider and larger views to be suf-

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ficiently in earnest about anything to effect anything ; but all the most bigoted men, in Church matters, in politics, or as regards any public question—the most bigoted men, you will generally find, are the most active men. I do not think that they are any the less mischievous for that, but there they are. As a matter of fact, bigots often put to shame those who have more enlightened views by their superior activity. They are untiring in their efforts ; they leave no stone unturned to achieve their ends ; they keep one thing always in view ; and whatever they are, and whatever they do, that one thing, be it the prevailing of their own particular form of religion or be it the prevailing of their own particular conception of the welfare of the nation, or whatever it be, in season and out of season they are instant about it, and they bring every single thing that they do and talk about and every single cause they lend their support to, they do it with the end of advancing that upon which their heart is set. If only, dear people, we could arrive at the same earnestness in our more enlightened fashion and with our more enlightened methods as was shown by the bigots of the Inquisition, for instance ; if only we were as much affected with zeal as they were in the days when, it has been said, they burned men's bodies for the good of their souls ; if only we were as much affected about good causes and about helping men's bodies as well as their souls as they were in those days, the world would be a great deal better place to live in than it actually is For bigots—mind this—may be distinguished very broadly from the great mass of indifferent and aqueous

pietism—they may be distinguished from it in this way: that bigots are men who know what they want, and will do anything in the world, lawful and sometimes unlawful, to gain what they want. Now in that respect we none of us desire to follow them, I hope; but in respect to their earnestness, in respect to the way in which they keep the main point that they desire straight in front of them always, we most of us who profess more enlightened opinions have a great deal to learn from them—concentration of purpose, energy in carrying out the purpose when we have once conceived it. Those are valuable things; those are things which do really effect great changes in the world; and it is a pity that so often those high qualities should seem to be the peculiar property of bigots.

Well, and then come back to St. Paul. He was a bigot before his conversion, and he was a religious bigot. And there was that curious thing about him that you see about religious bigots in these days: he was very hard-hearted. There is nothing in religion, nothing even in the Christian religion as we profess it now, that seems to protect a bigoted man against hardness of heart. At this present day men who are bigoted in their own conception of Divine truth will do the cruellest things and say the cruellest things about those who differ from them. Nothing seems to move them; no considerations of pity or tenderness seem to have any effect upon them. So it was with Paul. You would think that the purity and the youth and the holiness of St. Stephen would have touched him, but they had exactly the effect which

purity and tenderness seem to have upon bigoted natures: they added fuel to his indignation. The name of Christ was an abomination to him, a thing to spit upon. The followers of Christ were in his eyes men outside the pale of human sympathy. They deserved nothing but to be harried, and worried, and persecuted, and killed, and swept off the face of the earth.

Now look at the same man twenty years after, and you will find in him still that which I say we have to lament the want of in people of enlightened opinions in these days. You will find the same energy, the same zeal, the same concentration of purpose, in him; you will find all that the same, and you will find in him other qualities that you did not find before, a deep humility, a humility that is always breaking out. The most touching thing, I always think, about St. Paul is the way that, even in his greatest eloquence in his epistles, he never seems to be able to forget that it had been he who persecuted the Church of God; that it had been he who breathed out threatenings and slaughters, who harried and devastated the fold of Christ. You see this in him: a deep humility. You see the same zeal and the same energy, ay, almost the same recklessness, that there was about him before. But now he thinks exactly the opposite of what he thought before. He is the same man, and yet he is such a different man. What is it that has come into him that has made this tremendous difference? What is it that has come into him that makes him so gentle where he used to be so hard, so forbearing where he used to be so impatient, so tender

and kind where he used to seem so hard-hearted and cruel?

Now you get his account of it in these few words: the love of Christ constrained, took him up, as it were embraced him, as it were restrained him, as it were kept him in its grasp. The love of Christ gripped him. He was His captive. He could know nothing else from henceforth but how to make himself the champion of Christ's work. The love of Christ gripped him. He who had hated Him, he who had execrated Him, he who had spat at the name of Christ, he who had hated it with a hatred that only intense natures like his are capable of, with no common hatred, no puny, mean, miserable jealousy or envy, but with a hatred which only intense natures are capable of feeling—he now can do all things, he says, but only through Christ, who strengtheneth him. He against whom he had done the most powerful things in his life he now confesses to be the Author of his new being. "In Christ Jesus," he cries out, "there is a new creation. Old things are passed away; all things are become new." Was it not so in his case? The old things, the old bigotry, the old hardness, the old cruelty, have passed away; all things are become new. All things around him and within him change; all things in heaven and earth look different from what they were before, all his thoughts, all his aspirations, all his associations, ay—we come to it at last—all his motive, different. He was like a watch with a new mainspring, with a new kind of mainspring, and all the machinery had to be altered to adjust itself to the new mainspring. So it was with him.

There was a new mainspring in his life, and he lets us into the secret of it: "The love of Christ constraineth us"—holds us in its grip.

And the method of this change was a change of motive. Before he had been influenced, as bigoted people always are influenced, by motives like these: self-assertion, self-indulgence. Before that he had been led by party spirit; he had been the slave of the mere names of things; he had been stimulated by self-seeking; he had been held back by shame; he had been pushed forward by fear; he had been moved by patriotism, by enthusiasm for religion not according to knowledge. Now all these lower motives, into which self enters so largely—all these lower motives were neutralised, were crushed away, were transformed, were almost glorified in one transcending thought: the overwhelming love of Christ. The love of Christ held him in its grip, and all these motives had faded away like the dew before the morning sun.

Brethren, it was a wonderful conversion, as we call it in the collect for the festival; it was a wonderful conversion. And, mark you, the account of it is the most simple thing in the world. The account of it is something which, if people will just but look at it and think of it, is before our eyes every day: the love of Christ. And by that he means here, not the love which he felt for Christ, but the love which Christ felt for him, not his own affection, not his own devotion—those were only secondary; those did not hold him in a grip, but the source of love, Christ Himself, the love which Christ felt for him, held him in its grip. The love of Christ for him, ay, for him, for others, for the

world steeped in ignorance and misery—that was the bond of his captivity ; that was the thing now which directed all his energies; that was that to which his life now became the response ; that was, so to speak, the secret that explained everything, why he could not have a home, why he must be in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of his own countrymen, in weariness often, in deaths often. You want to get the secret of it all, why he must be like that. The love of Christ held him in its grip, and sent him everywhere, anywhere, if by going there he could hope to bring men to Him.

And so love in him reached its perfect fulfilment—that perfect fulfilment of communion, Christ in him and he in Christ. It was no more he—he tells us that—it was Christ in him. It woke up within himself all that wonderful incorporation of himself with Christ to know which now is the highest blessedness of this world. It was no more he, but Christ that dwelt in him, Christ who, so to speak, haunted him, Christ whose cross, so to speak, was never absent from his life or from his mind for a minute, which always, so to speak, occupied the background, so that he had only but just to turn round, and there was the thought of Christ and, as it were, the sight of Christ. Others might forget the event, but the very energy, the very earnestness, the very intensity, with which he had persecuted the name of Christ, makes it impossible for him ever again to forget Him whose love had come to be the one great motive power, the one great mainspring, of his life. What had Christ been to him, he who counted himself, in no feigned language of

fictitious humility, the chief of sinners? What had Christ been to him? He had sought him out; He had rebuked him; in a vision from heaven He had drawn him to Himself; He had caressed him, as it were; He had held him up; He had gripped him; He had fettered him; He had made him, as it were, His willing slave, His more than captive.

And it always seems to me that the conversion of St. Paul, if people will think about it, is the very highest evidence that can be found for the truth of the Christian religion. And it is one of those experiences which, though they seem to be unique, are really repeated in every single soul that turns away from sin to God. All of us, brethren, when we sin, do what Paul did before his conversion. We do not kill people for their opinions nowadays, but every time we hate others for what they think or for their real or imaginary injuries towards us Christ calls to us from heaven, though we hear Him not, "Why persecutest thou Me?" There is in us the same stubbornness, the same hardness, in essence there is the same attitude, as there was in Paul before his conversion. His love of Christ, the love of Christ which came to him, made him a different man.

And so it should be with you and me. The great, the supreme, question of our lives is, How are we treating the love of Christ? Whether you forget it or whether you remember it, whether you answer it or whether you ignore it, Christ still loves to the uttermost every single one of us. But is the love of Christ the constraining motive of our life? Has it got you in its grip, my brother? Does it urge you on to

what you ought to do? Does it keep you back from what you know you ought not to do? Is it the impulse that makes you give yourself and, as a sign of yourself, give whatever you can to God? Is the love of Christ the thing behind which enters into all your service? When you go to work to-morrow, is it the mainspring in the watch? is it the motive at the root of your life? Because if it is, however deficient you may be, however short you may fall, all is well with you. But if you only think of it now and then, if you never let it have a chance with you, if when it calls from heaven to you, as it does call from heaven to you now sometimes, if you will listen for it, "Why persecutest thou Me?" when you have been cruel, when you have been angry, when you have been jealous, when you have been hard upon other people, you feel an uncomfortable sense within you, there is the voice calling you from heaven, "Why persecutest thou Me?" If you will think of it, if you will pray that you may know it, that love of Christ will be as clear to you as it was to St. Paul. It will take you; it will grip you; it will drive you to what you ought to do; it will restrain you from what you ought not to do; it will become the guiding motive, it will become the mainspring of your life.

And one word more. What determines character? Remember it always, it is not what you do that determines what you are, because you may do things, and you may do the very best things in the world—and some do them—really only as a sort of commercial undertaking, hoping to get something back for doing them: the praise of men, or the approbation of your

own conscience even, or popularity. How many men there are who do, if they would only look at themselves, all sorts of good things, not because they are good, but in order that they may get a name for being good in those ways. If they would only look at themselves and think, there really is a sort of barter, a sort of commerce, about the good things they do.

No, character does not necessarily grow by good deeds. It may, of course, if they are done for good reasons, but it may not, and character may worsen through deeds that outwardly look good ; and there is only one way in which character grows. Character in you and me, in every man and woman, is determined by motive. Remember that always. A good tree must bring forth good fruit. So you, if your motives are good, if you try to act from some great, high-strung, constraining motive like the love of Christ, if you try to get a few motives, the best you can get—the love of Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the love of the Father, the welfare of mankind —try and get a few strong motives that you can easily turn round and look at when you are busy, and act upon. These are the things which determine character ; these are the things which make the fruit good ; these are the things which make the tree good, and therefore the fruit good.

And of all motives remember this is the purest : the love which Christ feels for us. There is in it as it comes to us something more, much of gratitude, much of loyalty, much of personal affection—it all, all comes through dwelling on that perfect ideal which

was before the Apostle whose feast we are keeping to-night. To him, as he says, "to live is Christ," for Christ was ever with him, and by him, and over him, ay, and underneath him, for it was through Christ alone that he bore the hard peril and the many disappointments of his long and weary ministry, and it was through Christ alone that he overcame death and has entered into life everlasting.

THE STANDARD OF CHRISTIAN EXCELLENCE.

By the Rev. Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.*

"Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."—St. Matt. v. 48.

THE standard of what is excellent in religion is different from that of morality, different in this sense: that, while it includes the moral standard, it goes beyond it into another and a higher region. "This do, and thou shalt live," is good, but "Be ye perfect in love, even as your Father is perfect in love," which is the religious standard, is better. It takes in the moral, and then gives it infinite development. The moral standard has to do only with the relation of man to man; the religious standard founds our duty to man on the relation of God to man. The moral standard bids us be satisfied with the harmony of our actions with the demands of conscience; the religious standard demands that harmony also, but bids us be not satisfied with it when we have attained it, unsatisfied till we are one with the perfection of the Father. This is the difference between Christ and the moralist. The standard of personal morality

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is to keep our conduct—no, to keep our thoughts —in harmony with what we know to be right; and if we can at all reach that, happy are we. But while the religious standard insists on the standard of morality being attained, it goes further, and he who sees its beacon shining far off above the waves, and longs after it as the poet longs after the archetype of beauty, speaks after this fashion: "There is a boundless realm of righteousness with which I am unacquainted, an infinite glory of love, and justice, and mercy, on the skirts of whose brightness alone have I lived, an ocean of spiritual beauty whose waters are illimitable and on whose shore no man has stood. The perfect is before me, and yet I know it not; but I have seen it shining, and I am wholly uncontent with all that I have done for holiness, and love, and mercy, when the moral standard of man lay before me. Though I attain, it satisfies me no more, and I know when I attain them or if I attain them I shall not be satisfied. I will attain them, but they are finite, and unto the sea of their infinities I would set sail beyond the flaming light into the undiscovered glory." That glory is not in himself, nor has it been developed in him by his own power. Its source is beyond; what there is of it in him has come from without him. There is One in whom it abides, whose very life is these Divine powers, acting infinitely and in themselves infinite. He is God, my Father. To Him I aspire; with Him I desire communion; into His illimitable love, justice, and truth, I will enter, never rest until they are my very life. To be approved of my fellow-men is not enough, to realise their standard is not enough, for my God must

approve me, and His standard must be mine ; therefore "as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God!"

This is the religious standard, the Christian standard, and it includes the moral standard. If it is not included in a man's life, if the man who says the Christian standard is his does not do the works of the Law, if he is not striving to realise the moral standard, then he is not religious, and his declaration that he pursues the higher standard is not true. The dispassionate pursuit of the infinite love and righteousness in God is not the whole of religion. Its standard has also to do with our life among our fellow-men, and here also it is another thing than the moral standard. When we return from this voyage of the imagination, led by faith, into the higher realm of uncontented aspiration after God, and in the light we bring back from that again consider our duty to man, the aspect of that duty changes. The higher standard I had before me is this —so may a man speak—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," a definite, finite standard, possible to be attained and to be content with when attained ; but I know now or see something of the infinite love there is in God, and now I say, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour better than thyself, as Jesus loved the world ; thou shalt lay down thy life for the lost, nay even for thine enemies, for so only shalt thou be in the region of the perfect." I am wholly unsatisfied and no more than an unprofitable servant, if I love others only as I love myself. I must lose all thought of myself, all love for myself, all memory of myself, in my delight in the life of others. Men are not only my

brothers now, as before: they are also children of God, my Father. In that belief I can love even those who are base, wicked, cruel, useless, and idle, and labour for their salvation; they also will be made sharers in the infinite love, as I hope to be myself. Nay, I can suffer all things at the hands of men and not cease to love them, give up my life for those who take my life, if God will yet make all men His own.

This is the standard of Christianity as applied to human action, and you see it more than includes the highest standard of conduct, that its outgoings beyond that standard into love are endless. To reach that standard completely is in the very nature of it impossible, for if we could reach it, it would be no longer infinite. It is of the very essence of Christianity, in contrast with morality, that its standards supply illimitable aims to illimitable effort, and if, as I believe, we shall live for ever, it is an adequate blessing to know that never in endless eternity we shall grow weary of life by reason of attainment. We shall always be inspired by the passion of unsatisfied endeavour. That was the standard of Jesus, that which He held up for Himself and for the striving of man. It was a religious standard, not merely a moral one. It included all that morality demanded, but it far exceeded all moral aims; it passed beyond law which enforced right into love which rejoiced to do the right; it left the self-contentment of the moralist far behind, and replaced it by an uncontented aspiration of the soul towards the perfection of God; it made the love of men and the love of God one passion in the heart by

binding up indissolubly God and man, the Father with the child. This it was that made Him a religious Teacher more than others. To call Him a moralist, to mix Him up with moral teachers, to say that He had a high morality, is not only to give an inadequate, it is to give a false, account of Him. Morality is a step in His teaching, but it is only a step. Those who follow Him truly are not followers of the moralists. They do what they ask, but they do it for other reasons than those they give. To the moralist belongs the finite, the possible, but to the Christian man belong the finite and the infinite, or rather because the infinite belongs to him the finite also belongs to him. The infinite contains the finite ; love contains law.

Therefore Jesus did not say, "This do, and thou shalt live ; and that is all thou needest" : He did say, "Be perfect in love, as God is perfect." He laid the indefinite, the impossible, the unattainable, before men ; He appealed to the infinite compassion of the human heart and that spirit within us which is as illimitable in its desires as God is illimitable in the supply of those desires ; He held up before men the Divinest excellence. "Let that," He cried, "let God Himself, be your aim, and nothing less than that. Be perfect in love, as God is perfect in love." And in this call upon that which in its nature asserts its natural union with God—and it is with a passion which is the deepest of all human passions, which lives in intensity when all other desires decay, which begins to live most strongly when the moral goal has been attained, and which soars out of the death of all things, like the fabled bird, in rejoicing life, to the heaven of incessant life, and cries, "Nothing in

heaven and earth will ever content me but that which I shall never realise: absolute union with God"—in this full and high call upon us Jesus showed how well He knew the Divine and infinite nature of man, and proved Himself not a moralist only, but a religious Teacher. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"; "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth"; "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven"; "Be ye perfect"; "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness"; "Have faith in God"; "Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven"; "Be filled with righteousness when you have thirsted for it"—these words, living and breathing far beyond the outskirts of the moral world, fell upon the spirit of mankind and gave it hands, and feet, and burning heart, and thrilling voice. They breathed into it, as no words of the moralist have ever done, a living soul of aspiration. Men answered them as they had never answered the ethical teachers. "Yes," they said, "this is what we want, to be at one with the infinitely great; to be at one with God; to have the perfection of God; to be never satisfied; to pursue without a pause after an infinite righteousness; to climb ever after an unattainable truth, but which rejoices us at every step: this is the excellent thing; this is the unique glory of life; nay, to have it is life itself."

This is the religious view, contrasted with the moral view, of life, this pursuit after ideals which we believe will end in God, and which we believe we shall attain or go on striving to attain for ever. Approve these things, nay, rather fall in love with them, and work

and live for them as you do for one whom you passionately love on earth, as indeed loving creatures, whose affectionate impulse may be yours, and He in whom they inhere can become personal to you and abide with you, as friend with friend, as father with child, in a nearer relation than any relation on earth, His being interwoven with yours as woof is woven in the warp.

There is nothing more practical, though men choose to deride it, than this love for perfect things, for things, that is, which we shall always pursue after and never fully attain. To passionately pursue the ideal is the best way to secure the real; to hunger and thirst after the spiritual is easily to accomplish the moral; to live for the universal truth is to attain particular truths; to live in self-forgetfulness is to be freed from all selfishness; to rejoice in God is to have joy in everything that comes from God and to have no care for anything which is not in harmony with Him; to know the spiritual beauty of perfect purity and grace is to know all other beauty in the world; to love the very best in truth, the mother, that is, of religion, is to always see in the most degraded sparks of righteousness and love, that tenderness may kindle to a flame, is to see also, as you move in the world, the truth beneath the untruth, the Divine underneath the evil, in all the opinions and schemes of men, and seeing it, be able to bring forth the truth into the light, and by doing so set free the minds of men.

Not practical? It is almost the only practical thing in the world. It is also said that it is not quite human

to care for these ideals, because they are unattainable, and that they do not help the trouble of men who care for them. It is enough to say that those who care for humanity the most are the persons who most realise these things and most care for them, and that the most human are those who have felt them most deeply and preached them most fervently. The great prophets, the great poets, the great artists, the great philosophers, the men who have most moved the world, are those who have never relinquished this unattainable pursuit, who lived uncontent and died unsatisfied. And I might say with truth that it is only when men love that which is perfect and are uncontent with far-off conceptions of love and righteousness which they believe in, aspiring and hungering after coming good and believing in it, that their own trouble in life is lessened and that they are able to lessen better the trouble of others ; that they can bear the heavy weight of being ; that their affliction is illuminated with a light that makes them rejoice when they are most cast down, which lifts them over it at times as if they were on wings, which enables them never to despair of men, and in faith and hope creates a new work, while it saves the old. Strip away these ancient faiths and inspirations from men, take away from men the spirit which aspires after the unattainable, dissolve these ideals, and you will ruin the human race. Oh, let us cling to all the deep, imaginative religions and beautiful faiths that have been set before us over the whole world from the beginning, and remember that the more we fulfil their demands and represent their glory in life, the more we shall win those who reject

them now to look upon their splendour and fall in love with them.

Lastly, where shall we find this excellence of religion realised in the human life? Where has religion of this kind been embodied? For it is human to demand something of a realised ideal. Why, in many men and women whom we have heard of this beautiful thing has been largely realised. Nay, in our own lives surely we have seen many examples that have made us feel that the perfection of God has drawn nearer to us in humanity.

But we have as Christians here the highest realisation of this life, of this excellence towards perfection in union with God and in love of man, in love that rejoiced to die for love, in Jesus Christ our Master. And so vivid was this love, just because He was more than the moralist, so boundless was the passion that was in Him for the Divine, so close do we feel His communion with God to have been, that it seems as we think of Him when we have entered into His life that He is actually present with us in every incident of the striving of the soul towards the perfect, actually living in our souls, though He has been dead for centuries. It is as if He were walking beside us in the street, sitting with us in our home, speaking to us warning, praising, and uplifting us hour by hour. It is impossible not to believe at times that He is with us more closely than the closest friend, and the love, and honour, and pleasure, and trust that we feel towards Him is the most real human feeling that we possess in this world, where so many shadows claim to be real.

We know then that which is most excellent in the religious life, in relation to God and in relation to man—we know it present with us as if we touched it. It is not common. Few as yet have come close to it, though all shall be won at last. It remains far, far above us, yet we feel it is not far out of our reach. We have our ideal, yet it was realised in the human life. There then is the living human religious standard. Confess it, cling to it, study it, pursue after it, night and day, think of it in all your thought, feel it in every emotion, act it in every act, shape it into every aspiration, till, as the light dwells in the air, the love of Jesus dwells in you. Then you will understand the meaning of the words, "Be ye therefore perfect in love, even as your heavenly Father is perfect."

THE DOCTRINE OF ANGELS.

By the Rev. W. Page Roberts, M.A.*

"Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." St. Matt. vi. 10.

THE Lord's Prayer in two sentences declares nearly all that we can with any confidence affirm about heaven. It tells that in some way beyond our comprehension heaven is the dwelling-place of God: "Our Father which art in heaven." We can scarcely localise that beauteous life diffused unseen throughout eternal space, and yet we know that that which is everywhere is nearer to some than it is to others. Some even in this life are so near to God that their souls can say, "O God, Thou art my God." And the Lord's Prayer tells us that heaven contains agents acting in subordination to the will of God, whose service is of so fine a nature that they may be taken by man as his ideal, up to which he must aspire in prayer: "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth."

By what steps have these thoughts of heaven and angels been reached? Have these thoughts been superseded by later ones? Must we be content to

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hold them as final, or must the vision of angelic beings dissolve in the cold light of reason like Urania and Puck and the elfin bands that used to ply their unseen witcheries on mortal men? Philosophy will clip an angel's wings, conquer mysteries by rule and line, empty the haunted air of nomad bands. Permit me then this morning to retrace the steps by which we have reached our present thoughts of angels and heaven.

To begin with, all rude people look upon the sky as a solid roof in which the stars, and moon, and sun are fastened. From the regions above this sky-roof come rain, and hail, and snow. This was the belief among the early Hebrews, and it has been preserved in their ancient traditions. We read last Sunday morning of the firmament which divided the waters above the firmament from the waters which were below the firmament; and we read about the windows of heaven being opened to let down the flood. One rabbinical story tells how that two stars were taken out of the solid firmament above the earth in order to get openings big enough for the descent of the deluge.

But one of man's earliest gods was the great heaven. It was a god to the Semite, as it was to our Aryan ancestors. Who can be surprised that the sun was a primitive object of worship? It is, I confess, surprising that when the Temple was built and its services established, and up to the time of the Captivity—it is surprising that sun-worship was practised by the Israelites all that time, and that together side by side with the worship of Jehovah the worship of the sun was practised. But what more natural than that the desert nomad should worship the sun? How could

he help it? When he lifted up his eyes in the early morning from the ground on which he had been sleeping or crept from under his dull dingy tent into the dull dawn, and saw, ascending from the horizon to the topmost sky, the great red sun, advancing like a resistless monarch, no wonder he bowed his head before the increasing splendour! And the moon and the stars, they were wonderful beings, but the heaven was more wonderful still. Sun, and moon, and stars were only like its children. It held them all, and could hold thousands more, in the hollow of its hand. They went away, but it never did. They might be killed when they were away and not come back again at all, but the great heaven was always present, often terrible, hurling its fiery javelins, consuming rock, and tree, and beast, and man, and shaking the earth with its angry voice.

Probably the stormy, threatening heaven was one of the earliest objects of worship with Turanian, Semite, and Aryan. Some students of religion consider that the Jehovah of the Jews had in their early days been a sky-god, a god of the heavens, that in their savage state the Beni-Israel worshipped the sky in the name of Jehovah, or Yahveh; and they say that the poetical language of the Bible bears trace of such primitive worship of heaven, just as we know that the sun was worshipped until a comparatively late period of their history. For, remember, the poetry of one age has often been the prose of the previous age. When the Hebrew said this, "The God of Jeshurun rideth upon the heavens," and when he sang, "He rode upon the cherubims and did fly," and when he said again, "He

maketh the clouds His chariot, and walketh upon the wings of the wind," these expressions may have become purely metaphorical, but it is thought by some *savants* that these verses once were uttered as eternal truth, that in the Semitic dwelling-places Jehovah was the god of the stormy heaven and one of their earliest objects of worship, as Indra was to those whose faith is represented by the Vedas. Gradually, however, men looked upon the heaven and the sun and other physical objects as only the clothing, the outward sign and body, as it were, of a God who dwelt inside them as the living soul. As the Greek recognised a Divine presence in the graven image which was yet distinct from it and as certain Christians recognise a Divine presence in certain consecrated material things, so the heaven was supposed to contain a real Divine presence, as it were, distinct from it, just like our soul is within us and animates our body, and yet is distinct from it. Then they separated still more widely, and the heaven became as distinct from the thing as the man is distinct from the house in which he lives. And then there was a god of the earth, and a god of the heaven, and a god of the sea; and heaven became the palace, the presence-chamber, of God, and the powers of nature were His ministers, and the spirits of nature became angels, who, like courtiers and officers of state, surrounded the Monarch and stood ready to speed at once on His commands.

But the latest development of the doctrine of heaven —namely, as the abode of good men departed this life—did not clearly emerge during Old Testament days. The nearest approach to such an idea is in the

book of Daniel, which is a very late book, written not such a very long time before the coming of Christ. The thought of good people going to heaven when they die would have been as unfamiliar to a Jew as it would have been to an Athenian to think that good Greeks went to Olympus when they died. Pfleiderer speaks of the un-Jewish hope of another world in heaven. Faith in a rich and radiant immortality had no existence through the greater part of Old Testament days, and therefore such words as those precious words of Christ, "In My Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you"—such words as those could not have been spoken even by the greatest of the Jewish prophets.

Now what did Christ mean when He said or suggested that God's will was done in an ideal and perfect way in heaven? I think He must have had present to His mind the service of the angel ministrants of God. We know that when Christ lived the doctrine of angels had become large and definite. I hope to-day you will not be tired if, as I trace the doctrine of heaven from elementary nature-worship, I present you with a very brief sketch of the belief in angels. Do not, I pray, let any of my rationalistic friends regard such a subject as a kind of *furor poeticus*, as Shelley's "Skylark," and as ideal, or as the latest born and loveliest vision of Olympus' faded hierarchy. The existence of angels is as much in accordance with the forecasts of science as it is congenial to the poetry and the dreams of man. There is nothing to stagger the most exact mind in the thought that there are beings in this universe higher and more powerful than man. Science

has discovered in the heavenly bodies, many of which are inconceivably larger than that which we inhabit, substances identical with those that surround us. If our globe has produced life it is not irrational to suppose that they may produce life, and if life has here attained to mind it is not impossible that there also it may have reached the same altitude. Why should we think that the human mind and its flower, the flower of moral excellence—why should we think it cannot be surpassed? Why, we ourselves dream of intelligence not our own and goodness never reached by us. If the worlds of the great heaven, in structure like our own, are vaster, why may they not have inhabitants superior to us in intelligence, in virtue, and in beauty? At least it is not for evolution to shrug its shoulders at an angelic world and ever-ascending hierarchies, principalities, and powers. It may not seem to be of much consequence to us whether there are angels or not, any more than whether there is sodium in Saturn; but there is nothing irrational in imagining or in believing that in greater realms than ours mind may have reached to finer development.

The belief in angels passed over directly from Judaism to Christianity. Christianity, I may say, created the doctrine of heaven as the abode of holy men and women departed; it simply received the doctrine of angels. It is after the close of the Old Testament canon that the doctrine of angels reached its highest development, and in this form it passed into Christianity, as did also a developed doctrine of demonology. Belief in angels is more characteristic of Christianity than it is of any other religion in the

world, but it is less prominent in the Old Testament than it is in the New. The word "angel" occurs more frequently in the single book of the Revelation than it does in the whole of the Old Testament put together; and it is much more frequent, as you will notice, in the later books of the Old Testament than in the earlier, as, for instance, in Zechariah, Daniel, and Malachi, whose very name, I believe, means "angel" or "messenger." And this must be remembered by careful students of the Bible, because these prophets wrote after the Babylonian captivity; and it was when Persian beliefs on some subjects had been appropriated by the Judæans that the more frequent and definite references to angels occurred.

But we should be in error if we imagined that the Jews took their belief about angels altogether from Persia. They had, to start with, certain crude notions about angels. In Genesis vi. we are told that the angels of God, or the sons of God, married the daughters of men, from whom sprang a race of heroes. Dr. Robertson Smith intimates that this story is not at all natural to Hebraic modes of thought, and he says this legend must have been taken over from a lower faith. Angels are represented in the Old Testament as talking, and wrestling, and brandishing swords, and eating, and there is a strange verse on which a great deal of folly has been written: "So man did eat angels' food." Sometimes an angel is called in the Bible a man. It says there was a man wrestled with Jacob, and Mr. Maurice says that nowhere in Scripture is an angel represented as of any other essence or even of another form than man. Now it

happens sometimes—I say it with all modesty—it happens sometimes with the writings of my illustrious predecessor in this pulpit, ordinary men find it hard to say positively what they mean. They are not always certain whether a thing is affirmed or denied, or both affirmed and denied; and "reason fades in the dim twilight of Plutonic shades." If Mr. Maurice means that wherever we have in the Bible an angel presented as only a man or a mere messenger, or whether he means it is always a celestial being, but that the nature and form of this celestial being are human, I am quite unable to decide. This is my perplexity: if the angel is celestial I do not know what authority there is for saying that in his essence and form he is only a man, for if it is so how did the person who saw a celestial angel know that it was anything else but a man? Those who in times past were personally introduced to ghosts generally knew they were ghosts. I may say, if I am allowed it, they saw through them. But a ghost whose essence and form were those of a man would most probably be regarded as a burglar if he were discovered in one of our houses, and as speedily as possible handed over to the police.

I think that very often when some startling event took place which men recognised as something they could not understand, and therefore as the operation of God, they personated the action, and said it was done by an angel. The winds of heaven are called God's angels, and pestilences are called God's angels, His evil angels, as when it is said of the plagues of Egypt, He sent evil angels among them. It does not mean devils. The Jews did not know any-

thing about devils in that day. They said in those days, "If there is evil in the city hath not the Lord done it?" The Persian creed intermingled with the old Hebrew belief. For let us remember that no one nation, in the providence of God, has ever been sufficient in itself to form a perfect religion. The final religion is the synthesis of the different Divine elements in all religions, and in our Christianity to-day you and I have contributions from the Persian Avesta. The Babylonian captivity and the subsequent friendship of the Persians and the Jews—you remember Cyrus is called by the prophet the servant of Jehovah, although he never forsook his own religion, which we should call a heathen one -I say the Babylonian captivity and the subsequent friendship of the Babylonians and the Jews had their place, in the providence of God, in the development of a religious belief. The angels of different countries, like Michael and Gabriel, and, in the book of Tobit, Raphael, as well as the mysterious Azazel, may have been adopted from Zoroastrian sources. As for the fall of the angels, we can say nothing whatever about it. The reference to it in the book of Jude cannot justify an elaborate creed like that which Milton has established in our minds. Who can understand the verse in the leaflet we call Jude which says, "Michael disputed with the devil about the body of Moses"? Absolutely unintelligible! The book of Jude was long before it established its place in the canon, and in the present day its right is denied by weighty scholars.

And now in Christianity the doctrine of angels has been raised into a purely spiritual atmosphere. Angels

are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation." If to-day belief in angels has but little influence upon human life—and it matters not, if God be with us, who is our guardian and guide, whether an unseen spirit from His presence is about us, or His own Holy Spirit is within us, it matters not, if God be with us, how He comes - nevertheless the belief in angels has secured for itself a pre-eminent place in Christian poetry and painting. Impossible as are the beings with feathery wings or the bodiless cherubs whose sweet faces look out upon us from the great Italian masters, who could fail to feel the spiritual beauty of Browning's "Guardian Angel," even if he had not seen Guercino's picture at Verona? I say we should be poorer men and women if we lost the idea of these beautiful beings. We mean by an angel, it may be without distinctly saying it to ourselves—we mean by it goodness, and purity, and burning devotion raised up into consummate beauty. You say it is only an idea, but is not it a good idea? is not it a great idea? is not it an inspired idea? In this world we do see goodness, and purity, and devotion, and beauty, but we do not see them united in one perfect being. We do not see any perfect beings. With us moral excellence is often allied with an imperfect temper, with a feeble intelligence, with bodily weakness, with vanity; and deep devotion may dwell in a narrow mind; and beauty may bewitch us with its eyes, and they, too, may have a gleam of the fiend behind them; and the heroes of the world may bear on their faces the scars of conflict, the pallor of exhaustion, the deep

lines of labour which never has attained its object. Man is not satisfied with the present unless he is like a cow or a pig. Man dreams of a better world, of goodness which is all beauty, of religion strong in soaring intelligence, as if it had an angel's wing. The Hebrew word "seraph" is derived from a root signifying "love," and the Hebrew word "cherub" is derived from a Hebrew root signifying "to know." And when love and knowledge, now so often divided—when they are united, love and knowledge, we have a perfect ideal, a thought of God, God's angel. An angel is perfect goodness, expressed by perfect beauty and led by loftiest mind. And if that is an angel, who dare shrug his shoulders at that? If we cannot believe in real presences in bread and wine and such things, thank God we can believe in the real presence in these minds of ours; we can believe that there can be there wise and beautiful goodness. What can ennoble the breast of maid, and matron, and man like the vision of an unspotted soul, clothed around in moral beauty?

And now we may understand why the great artists and holy ones of the world delighted in angels. What a soul must have been to Fra Angelico, painter and saint! It was the guardian angel of goodness which carried him to the skies and opened the heavens to his adoring genius. An angel means this—and it is something to take home for us if the rest is forgotten—an angel means the beauty of holiness, the beauty of holiness.

And now with your reason as well as with your spirit you may pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

OVERCOMING AS CHRIST OVERCAME.

By the Rev. Professor Iverach, D.D.*

"As I also overcame."—Rev. iii. 21.

THESE are striking and strange words. Striking and strange I call them, whether you look at the Person who has spoken them, or the occasion on which they were spoken, or more particularly if you look at the people to whom this epistle was written. "As I also overcame," says the risen Lord. Looking back on all the past and all the work He has done and looking up from the rest on which He has entered, He speaks thus to the Laodicean Church. And we read what kind of Church Laodicea was: a Church that had thought her work was done, that she had entered already on her rest, that she had nothing more to do except to fold her hands and look complacently at herself and her own attainment, and nothing more. It is strange to find that our Lord says these words to a Church like that, which had run well perhaps in former days, and had done great works, but was now settled on her lees, satisfied with herself and saying, "I am rich and increased with

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goods, and have need of nothing." Is it not strange, when you think of it, that our Lord should speak to a Church like that and set His own example of battle, and conflict, and victory, before her, saying to her, "As I also overcame, do ye overcome"? It is one of the unexpected ways of Scripture, one of the surprises that constantly meet us while reading our Bible, which constantly enforces this conclusion on our minds: that His ways are not like our ways, and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts; His therefore are very strange sometimes. When we read the old prophets and mark the denunciations of Israel and of the state of Israel which occur so frequently, and when we expect as a climax a word which will tell us that the patience of the Almighty has been exhausted, that He is to remove the candlestick out of its place, suddenly we get a "therefore" as you find in the second part of the prophecy of Isaiah frequently: "Therefore, behold, I, even I, am He that blotteth out thine iniquities." A logic this which is higher than the logic we use, something far better, far deeper, than we know. God's ways are not our ways. Instead of removing the candlestick out of the place, He that walketh among the golden candlesticks says to the sleeping Church, "As I also overcame." We should never have expected that, never have thought about it; we should have expected something else than a word to the Laodicean Church of this sort. "To him that overcometh"—why, they had given up all thought of overcoming. They had thought that they had overcome, that the battle was over, and the rest was secure. The Laodicean Church

was the worst of the seven. Not one good thing is spoken of her. They were satisfied with themselves; they had said they were rich and increased with goods, and had need of nothing: they had got their work done, a Church perhaps great in numbers, with rich traditions, and they had need of nothing. It is the only Church about which our risen Lord uses words to express His disgust, not merely displeasure, but disgust, as we find here. And yet—and this is the surprising thing—and yet it is to a Church of this sort that our Lord says, "To him that overcometh" will I grant this reward, "as I overcame."

You see, brethren, that our Lord will not let us go; He has no mind to let any one go, to give up any one whatsoever. Whether they be self-satisfied like this Church, or positively evil, as other Churches were, He will not let any one go, and will not allow any Church to be lost, if any word of His can help it. So He comes to this Church, to which He has spoken such terrible words, and He comes in earnestness, as the verse immediately before tells us. He comes to that sleeping, self-satisfied Church, and He pictures Himself as a traveller seeking to find a door, and when He has found the door He knocks. The house is His own; He should have been in all the time: the heart of this Church belonged to Himself, and He was Lord and Master of it; but they had shut Him out. He was once in, and is now shut out, and He comes knocking. That is even a more wonderful text than one would suppose from the use that we ministers make of it, for we often use it as if it were spoken to a people that did not know

Him, often use it to speak to the unconverted, and rightly so. I do not find fault, but that is not the first meaning of it. The first meaning of it here is, the Lord coming to members of the Church who have been making a profession of His name, and who have been earnest in their work, and somehow have got satisfied with the progress they have made, and have got so well satisfied that now the Lord Jesus, instead of being inside the heart, is outside. Instead of His ruling the life, they have somehow got Him away, and He has to stand at the door and knock for entrance once again. That is unexpected, too. We have got a Master like nobody else. Oh, what patience He has, and what need of patience He has! And how frequently and how deeply every one of us tries the patience of our Lord, and He has to come. Where should we be if He had not come? He has to come time after time, to stand at the door and knock, and He says, "If any man, any churchman, any man, even a Laodicean, if he opens the door, I will come in and sup with him." Think of that, brethren. And then He braces them up to work and trial once more by saying, "As I also overcame."

In these epistles, ay, and throughout the Scriptures generally, our Lord has a way of fixing our eyes on Himself and getting us to look at Him. Whatever purpose He has in view, He seems always to begin by getting us to look straight at Him. "Come unto Me"; "I am the way, the truth, and the life"; "I am the door"; "I am the gate"; "I am the light of the world." Whether He is speaking to those who have not known Him or speaking to those who have known

Him and declined from the faith, the first thing seems to be to get the man, whoever he is and whatsoever his history may have been—to get the man to look at Himself. He does not want this Laodicean Church to look any more at herself, and the wealth she has, and the goods that have increased. Ah, if she looks at that, at herself, at the wealth she has, she will never be any wiser. There is a very striking passage in the "Pilgrim's Progress." You remember that the pilgrim at the sepulchre got new garments, gifts of God, and a roll to read, and got great gladness in his heart, and he set out to climb the Hill of Difficulty; and he got wearied, as was natural perhaps, and he sat down to rest in an arbour provided for pilgrims such as he. He sat down to rest himself, and employed his time meanwhile in reading the roll, and while he read the roll, God's word to him, he was wide awake. Sleep was not near him. By-and-by the roll was given up, and he began to look at his garments. They were God's gifts, too, but now they were seen, and he began to admire the gifts he got and the beautiful garments with which he was clothed. And as soon as he began looking at himself and his goods and possessions, he fell asleep, and lost time, and was molested all the way, too late, too late, again and again, and fell into dangerous ways that he might have avoided, as the dreamer tells us, which others had avoided who had been more steadfast, less selfish, than he. And he got into the Valley of Humiliation at the wrong time, and had a fearful battle and conflict there. God's gifts—are we not right in admiring them when we have them ourselves?

Well, I am not to answer that question ; it would be very difficult. But this I will say : that it is a very dangerous thing to keep looking at ourselves, and Christ's cure for that is to get us to look away from ourselves ; whatsoever that self may be, whether rich and increased with goods, whether poor and miserable—ay it is no matter. Let them look away from self and see Jesus. That is the remedy for sin ; that is the remedy for laziness ; that is the remedy for self-satisfaction or whatsoever other form of spiritual weakness and infirmity may befall us : " looking unto Jesus."

And when we look to Him there will be reflections in us. The contrast will be so great that we shall feel, like Peter, that we are sinful men. There will be no self-satisfaction in the man who sees the face of our Lord.

And then notice further, He sends us back to think of all that He had done, of the work which He had undertaken and had finished, sends us back to think of His battle and His victory, that He may rouse us to fight our battle and to overcome. And when we see Him—whether it be, as He is to be seen to-day, at the right hand of the Father making intercession for us, or as He was in the days of His humiliation—the one result in both cases is just this : that we get ashamed of ourselves, and we forget what we have attained, and we press onwards to the mark for the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now think of what He means. Recall what you know of the manner in which He overcame and the things which He did overcome. I cannot recount

them all to you. It would just be to tell the Gospel story over again, or rather it would be to tell the whole story of revelation from the beginning on till now. For Christ did not begin His work when He came in the flesh. Christ's work, the work of the Eternal Son, began when creation began. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." His work began then, and began with a view to that day when He shall present His gathered children before the Father and say, "Behold, here am I, and the children whom Thou hast given Me," creation's work through all the long ages of successive beings rising up till there came a creature who could speak to God, and to whom God could speak, and then, when this creature misunderstood himself and his calling, there was not merely the creative work, but there was the beginning of a higher work again, the beginning of redemption, and the Eternal Word was working through the ages, through all history, and through all nations, preparing for the time when His redemption work would be complete. And then, that He might bring many sons unto glory, it was found needful that He should become a servant, that He should come and take on Him a created body, and that He should come and be a Man among men, become a Child in lowly circumstances. The Creator made Himself to depend for daily care on a mother's breast, submitted Himself not merely to created life, but to the unconscious life of a child, and had to grow in wisdom and stature as other children grow, and had to be a boy like other boys, and had to get His mind opened to the wonders

of this present world, the lilies of the field, the trees, the growing grain, and all the rest of it, and to see children playing as children play. I often think of that parable about the children sitting in the market-place and calling to their fellows, "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented," and I say to myself that our Lord must have watched the children in the market-place playing and have taken an interest in their games. And then He had to work for daily bread as other working men do, and His hands grew hard with toil, and His carpenter's work must be faithfully done, for "is not this the carpenter?" And then when the consciousness of His mission came upon Him, and He came forth to enter upon His public ministry, oh think of those three years and the contradiction of sinners against Himself, the misunderstandings to which His action gave rise! His own people did not understand Him, and every one of them was a source of temptation to Him. His mother thought one day that He was working too hard, and she came out to take care of Him; and His brethren said, "He is beside Himself." He had been working through the day from early morning till late at night, and He could not get time to eat; and the mother and the brethren came and said, "Surely this is unnecessary; we will take care of Him." And when He told His disciples at Cæsarea Philippi that His work led Him to the cross and the grave, Peter said, "Far be this from Thee." Every one of His friends and His foes was setting before Him this alternative: "Save yourself and lose your work, or

lose yourself and save your work." From the day of the temptation in the wilderness till the day of the cross, these two things were set face to face before our Lord's mind ; and the last form it took was the cry of the priests to Him while hanging on the tree, "Come down from the cross, and we will believe you."

All this He had to endure ; all these things He had to overcome ; and He points us back to-day along that line of action, and calls on us to be up and doing, to run with patience the race that is set before us, "as I also overcame."

And there is more than this: there is the agony in the garden, about which one scarcely dares to speak. We are disposed to withdraw ourselves to a distance and bow our heads in awe in the presence of the unimaginable agony of the Son of God. To His lips was held the cup of the world's sin, mingled with the awful necessary wrath of the living God ; and He had, as His language on the cross tells us—He had to go down, down to the place where God seemed not to be, into the valley of the God-forsaken. It was a real feeling to which He gave utterance, for the world's sin had swept in a flood between the righteous Father and the righteous Son ; and there was on His part a feeling of conscious separation from the Father. Into the valley of the God-forsaken think of it!—and thus He overcame. Into the valley of the God-forsaken, into the unseen world! And thus He overcame. And He calls on us to have the same single-mindedness of devotion to our calling as He had for His, the same resolute desire to do the work given us to do as He

did His, the same resolute desire to press on and fulfil God's purpose for us as He did.

And really you have your work to do, as Christ had His work to do. And we have to bring to our work the same mind as Christ brought to His. That is the underlying thought here. As Christ did His work, so must we do ours. And then you have a work to do which you must get done. God has a purpose for every soul here, for every man and woman, something to be done by you, something to be accomplished in each one of you, which can be done and accomplished by and in no other person. I should like to get that fixed in my own mind and yours. Each one of you has a separate face. I can see a distinctive face which belongs to that person, and to nobody else in the wide world. That is a matter of observation, an observation that any one can make. But while we have all human faces and the same features, each one of us is different; and as such is the case with respect to those things which we see, it is the case also with regard to those which we do not see. You have a character peculiar to yourself, and you have a work peculiar to yourself to get done and experience to work out by God's grace which cannot be worked out in anybody else. And let us pray that God may reveal His Son in us, that we may find our life's work and get it done, as Christ has overcome, as Christ did His work.

And observe what follows from what I say. If that work that God means you to do, that character of yours which God means you to build up—if that is not done by you, it must remain undone; and there is a vacant place in the mansions of the Father's house

never to be filled up if you are lost. And when you are lost, I do not mean so much lost to yourself as lost to God, you have defrauded the living God; you have subjected Him to the loss, the eternal loss, the sorrow of that unfilled place in the mansions of the Father's house. You have got one life to live, only one; and so much of it has been lived. What have you made of it? What have we made of our life? God's grace visited us in days gone by: God's grace shook us to the centre, disturbed our self-possession, sent us as sinners on our knees to the throne of grace; God's grace followed us—shall I say?—to the communion table and to our place in the Church of Christ; God's grace pursued us all our life. And we have fallen into coldness and deadness of heart, work undone, characters unformed, our high calling not realised. Suppose all that is true—perhaps it is—yet I have a trumpet-call for you to begin again one life to live. Blot out the lukewarmness of the rest, look to Jesus, lift yourself up by looking at Him to understand what your calling is; and let us set ourselves about it to realise what God would have us to be. Ah, there is a purpose for us, a purpose for us which we did not form for ourselves, which is pressing on us in all the silent moments of our lives, in all our leisure time it may be. "I ought to be so and so, and I am not." And when that feeling comes, give place to it, yield to it, look up, and look out, and let us say, "It is never too late to mend, never too late to rise to the height of our calling." We may have missed opportunities, but Christ came to the Laodicean Church and knocked at the door of its heart, and Christ said to that Church and

to every person in it, "As I also overcame." Look up and see, see the risen God, hear His voice, and let us begin now or begin over again now and resolve that, by Christ's grace and strength, we will overcome, as He also overcame and is set down with the Father on His throne.

THE SUPREME PRAYER.

By the Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D.* Lk 18

WE read in the eighteenth chapter of the Gospel according to Luke a parable by Jesus Christ. It begins in the tenth verse: "Two men went up into the Temple to pray." We have read the whole parable. That is the subject.

"Two men went up into the Temple to pray." That is saying nothing. The men are more than men. We must descend to particulars; to qualities we must come. You see two men walking most of a mile away. They are nothing to you; they are figures on the road. You know nothing of them; you are not interested in their affairs. Now the Saviour proceeds, "The one a Pharisee and the other a tax-gatherer." Now we know something about the men. A Pharisee can never be more than a Pharisee; a tax-gatherer may become a converted man. I do not limit the miracles of God to the lowest class of men. God forbid. A Pharisee does not lie beyond the miracle-working energy of God the Holy Ghost. But, speaking from a human standpoint, I have no hope

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of any Pharisee. What is a Pharisee? A self-contented, self-satisfied man. He obeys the Law; he observes every stipulation; he is a disciplinarian in the letter, though he may be very self-indulgent in the spirit. He is very careful about the letter; he is very careful about his public reputation. Whatever he may do in secret, he likes to stand well in the eye of public criticism. That man cannot be saved unless he shall change his mental and moral mood, not up to the point of conversion, but up to the point that sees the necessity for conversion.

It is curious how men are limited by their own qualities. If water cannot rise above its own level, neither can certain qualities of character transcend themselves. It would seem, too, as if men were born in great sections, in mile-long strata, belonging peculiarly to one another, to a class, to a kind, species, quality, of manhood, and they cannot rise above it. They all think alike; they all speak alike; they all look alike; they all direct their lives by the same little book which they carry with them in order that they may know what to do at every stroke of the clock. They are Pharisees, proper persons, men who are righteous in their own eyes, men therefore who by so much feel themselves entitled to despise others. They cannot be converted in that mood. There will have to be an initial miracle performed upon such men before they can begin to consider the great question of conversion. If any man has come into this house all wisdom, he will not be profited by anything; he will feel that he stands upon a great crag, and looks down upon the whole of us with a

species of mild contempt. But if any man has come in here saying, "Teach me; give me some hint, some gleam of light, some word of direction," he will find it; he will find it in the hymn, or in the read Scripture, or in the pleading prayer, or in the word of exposition. He will find it. God never disappoints the earnest and steadfast purpose of man, supposing that purpose to be one of humble and intense desire to know what is right and to follow what is good.

Now this tax-gatherer was not good simply on the ground that he was a collector of taxes. A man's trade makes him neither good nor bad. A man is not necessarily a saint because he has twelve shillings a week, nor is a man necessarily a saint because he has a thousand pounds a week. These great moral estimates and standards of character have nothing whatever to do with these little, transitory, insignificant circumstances. You are what you are in the soul. This man's soul is shown. It is the purpose of the Saviour to reveal a man's soul. The Saviour said in effect, "This man has been brought to the point of self-abhorrence." He dare not look to heaven; he dare not look at man or woman or child or unplucked flower that yet retains its radiance, its right to be accounted a member of the paradise of God; he dare not look at anything beautiful. The sound of music hurts him, because he feels that he is a trespasser and has no right whatever in the sanctuary of holy things. So he gropes for mercy. "Can I be pitied? May I receive the mercy of God?" He will take all heaven with him; God will crowd him with riches; he will be loaded with the treasures of grace.

Why? Because he began at the right point. He began at the point of necessity, conscious self-necessity; he needed something. And what did the other man ask for? Nothing but a hearing. What did the publican ask for? God's greatest gift. When is God most God? When He is merciful. When is Omnipotence most omnipotent? When it cries; when it weeps; when it comes near the city and weeps over it, and says, "Oh, city, city, how often, how often, would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her brood under her wing, and ye would not." That is Omnipotence at its best. "Power belongeth unto God; unto Thee also, O Lord, belongeth mercy." Power in the hand of mercy is the very image and likeness of God.

So then we have two characters. They are contrasts; they enlighten or illuminate one another. Taking either by itself, it is incomplete; taking the characters contrastively, they are pregnant with suggestion, and we will study them with some profit.

"Two men went up to the Temple to pray." Very good. So far they are alike. How seldom does criticism follow the men until they take departure one from the other. "I am certain I saw the Pharisee go up to the Temple." "You did?" "Yes." "Then he is a church-goer?" "Yes, he is." "I am absolutely sure I saw the publican crouch under the door of the church as if he would crawl up to the altar." "Yes, he is a church-goer also." "Then there are two church-goers in the town?" "Yes, there are." Are you sure? Did the Pharisee really go? "Church"—what do you mean by "church"? Not the building;

that is only the initial definition of "church." Did the Pharisee really go to church? Did the Pharisee really pray? Not a word. No Pharisee can pray. Men cannot rise higher than their own character. What had this Pharisee been talking about all the week? His prayer. He never got beyond this; he never lived outside of it.

And here is the philosophy of human nature. A man who is selfish all the week must be selfish when he comes to pray. He cannot get out of it. You cannot leave your selfishness outside the church door, and then begin to pray in the right key and tone. It cannot be done. What is self-indulgence? What is self-gratification? Why, it is this. Listen to this Pharisee. We will join him on Sunday morning and company with him until church-going time. "There is none like me. I fill everything up. I have attended to all these things. I have had two fastings; I could have fasted twice more. It is nothing to me. I live an irreproachable life. I am the gentleman of the parish; I am the best man that I know of in these districts. I take care of myself; I am very anxious about my own reputation; I never do anything imprudent. In fact, I do not know a man of equal years and equal stature who can compare with me for a moment." So he chatters till the time of the ringing of the church bell. Now he goes to church, as we say, drawing upon our imagination rather than considering the spiritual reality of the case. Now listen to him. Can that man change his chatter? No. Can a man rise from that dust and take heed of God? He cannot. And you cannot be chattering about

your commercial bargains, and clevernesses, and intakings of simplicity and ignorance, to throw off your apron and come into church to begin to pray. Oh, sirs, London men or provincial, you cannot do it. He who does not pray all the week cannot pray on Sunday.

But the Pharisee used religious words? Certainly. Nothing cheaper; nothing easier. What did he say? Let us listen if there be any music in it. "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are: extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all I possess." I—I—I—I—I—oh, that prayer has not wing enough to get to the ceiling; how can it fly to heaven?

Yet this is a fundamental point: that a man is on Sunday what he has been all the week; and if you have been overreaching people, or overdriving people, or underserving people, or running away before the clock has struck twelve and returning a quarter of an hour after the clock has struck one, and if you have been playing the little thief all the time in this way, sir, you cannot sing; you cannot pray. You can have a hymn-book; yes, you can join in the general public utterances of praise. Yes, in a mechanical way, even perhaps in a professional way, but you do not sing. We are to sing with the heart, and the mind, and the understanding, and such singing only gets to heaven.

Why, that mows down many a great congregation! So it does. It is a tremendous scythe. It cuts down pulpits and pews ruthlessly! So it does. But we had better have the reality, we had better come to

reality, quality, sincerity, and definiteness, than mislead and bewilder ourselves by merely numerical successes. He only can pray on the Sabbath who prays without ceasing, not the long wordy prayer, but the heart-cry, the sigh without words, the look that has no syllables in it, the desire that never passes the lips, yet finds its way to God. Then when the time of the opening of the mouth comes behold the tender utterance, listen to the noble adoration, and hearken to the tender song.

It is important to remember this simply because a number of men undertake to discuss the question of prayer who have never prayed; and men who cannot pray yet undertake to write articles about prayer, and they want to put up competitive institutions, say that one shall pray and the other shall not pray, and they want to subject the kingdom of heaven to tests of this kind. They make little crucibles of their own, and say, "Here the question must be tested." Now all this is swept out of the way by the inclusive and dominating consideration that unless a man pray without ceasing—I do not say with words, but pray desiringly, yearningly, after God, and incessantly—he simply cannot discuss the question of prayer. It is impudence on his part to enter into any discussion of such a question. He has no status in that court. You say a flower has fragrance; I deny it. You call for my proofs; I say, "Here they are: I have weighed the flower; it is one ounce in weight I have walked round the flower; I have looked at the flower through a microscope; I have held the flower to my ear—it has no fragrance." Are you satisfied with

the proofs? No; you smile at them: you tell me with true wit and pertinence that I have not applied the right sense to the flower. Now I take it and bring it into contact with what you term the olfactory nerve. Ah yes, certainly; ah yes. The eye could not detect it; the hand could not find it; the scales could not measure it; the ear could not hear it; the microscope could not reveal it: but—oh, ah, why, it is full of sweetness! Its odour reaches the brain, and the heart, and the life. And are there fields of such flowers and gardens of such flowers? Oh, take me to them; I will live amongst them: this is the breath of sacrament.

Now until you apply the right sense to prayer you cannot discuss it; you can make nothing of it. It is like weighing the flower to find if it is fragrant. The necessity must be this: "'Oh that I knew where I might find Him!' I am alone; I am sad to broken-heartedness; I have lost one of the ten pieces of silver with which I started life. Oh, these wearyings of the soul! There must be some comforting personality; there must be something out of and beyond myself. Tell me, what is it?" Now you will not be long in finding God, because you feel your need of something, some one, some help, some light. You are not satisfied with yourself; you go out of yourself to find whatever may be, secret force, poetry, conservation of energy—whatever may be termed God, Father, Mother, Saviour; you will come back with sheaves rejoicing.

Oh, this cry for mercy! Did I not venture to say the other day in conducting my lesson amongst you, this is really the supreme prayer as between man and

man? Think of it for a moment. I would you could all feel its pathos as I have felt it and be broken down by it. A man says to you, "Have mercy!" Why, that should break your heart. Can I have mercy? Can I be merciful? I have told him that I must turn him out of his little house if he cannot pay that rent on Tuesday morning by ten o'clock, and he says, "Pity me!" My God, I will, I must, because I need to be pitied myself! When a man says to you, "Have mercy!" he pays the greatest tribute to your majesty and your Divinity of image. Oh, do hear him! And when your little child says to you, "Have mercy!" then spare him. When the wife, or the husband, or the friend, or the client says, "Have mercy!" you will never be so Godlike as when you say, "For Christ's sake, I will." And you know that the rent will be paid, that the difficulty will be overcome, and you will never have had so much money in the bank in your life as you will have at that very moment, if you once, by the power of the Cross, get over that selfish difficulty or that particular pressure, whatever it may be—I would not denominate it always by harsh names—when you say to him, brother of the earth who begs your pity, when you say to him, "I will! I will! I will!" There will come into your throat a great lump, as the Queen said once on hearing a prayer for her children; there will come into your heart a great stream of love, and you will say, "All the stars are mine, and the earth rolls round its axis and round the sun for my amusement." You will never be so near heaven until you pass through the gates of pearl and see the white throne in all its beauty.

The publican said this to God: "God be merciful to me a sinner," and went down to his house justified, rectified, made right, straight, lifted up into companionship with God. And the word "mercy" here is so pregnant in the original term. It relates to sacrifice, and to the Cross, and to all the mystery which we find culminating in the priesthood of Christ. It is not the exercise of a sentiment only, but the development and final expression of a gracious and sovereign law.

Now that is how we stand. So then prayer has become a new thing to us. You cannot read a prayer with any effect unless you read it with your heart. If you take what another man has written, you must pass it through your heart and soul and say, "Now these words are mine in their meaning, not in their letters."

What a short prayer it is!—"God be merciful to me a sinner." A self-prayer: "to me." A human prayer: "a sinner." A Divine prayer: "be merciful." Why, you and I might say that to-night and go to our houses justified. Now let us try to say it. Lord, teach us how to pray! And He says to us, as to little children, "Kneel down, feel that you need forgiveness, and say after Me, 'God—be—merciful—to—me—a—sinner.'" Prayer is not, "God be merciful to all sinners." There is a time for that prayer, the great public cry. But I am now speaking of personal prayer, a private, solitary interview with God, even though it be in the public temple. A man may be alone in a crowd, isolated in a congregation.

Speaking of personal prayer, there is another

instance a little further on in which I read—in the third chapter of the Acts—Peter and John went up together into the Temple at the hour of prayer. Two men, one man, both alike, both Christ-loving, Christ-seeking, Christ-adoring, Christ-serving. But what did they do on the road? Just what I have been trying to persuade myself and yourselves to do. What did they do on the road? They answered a brother's prayer. That is the way to get God interested in our prayers. The lame man said, "Give me an alms"; then Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." The man who answers the little prayer that he can answer need not despair when he goes further into the temple and says to God, "Have mercy upon me." This is the philosophy of Christian life. Said Christ, "You cannot pray until you have forgiven." "But, Lord, I think I can pray long resounding words and still retain my hate to my enemy." "No," He says; "you can use all the words, but you cannot pray: neither will your heavenly Father hear and forgive you unless ye forgive men their trespasses."

Now I address us all, pulpit and pew, as a common man, and say, Sirs, have we answered prayers on our own behalf? Have we paved the way to the temple by deeds of beneficence and kindness? Have we said in our hearts, "Yes, I will write that letter to-morrow and forgive that man"? Have we said, "Yes, I shall begin now to love every little child; I will; I will. If a man asks anything of me that I have and can give him, he shall have it"? Why, if you go to

the temple in that way, you have only to ask, and it shall be given, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. Heaven waits to repay your human love. But, sir, you never helped a human creature in your life. How can you ask God to love you? Oh, be not guilty of that blasphemy! Mercy brings us to the Cross, to the Sacrifice, to the precious blood. Oh, then hear this Gospel. Give it housing in your hearts, and say, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth." And the great King tarries at the cross to be merciful to the chief of sinners.

THE SECRET OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

By the Rev. Professor Dods, D.D.*

"But we all, with unveiled face reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."—2 Cor. iii. 18.

I SUPPOSE there is almost no one who would deny if it were put to him that the greatest possible attainment a man can make in this world is likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ. Certainly no one would deny that there is nothing but character that we can carry out of life with us, and that our prospect of good in any future life will certainly vary with the resemblance of our character to that of Jesus Christ, which is to rule the whole future. We all admit that, but almost every one of us offers to himself some apology for not being like Christ and has scarcely any clear reality of aim in this life of becoming like Him. Why, we say to ourselves, or we say in our practice, it is really impossible in a world such as ours is to become perfectly holy. One or two men in a century may become great saints; given a certain natural disposition and given exceptionally

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favouring circumstances, men may become saintly men : but surely the run, the ordinary run, of men, men such as we know ourselves to be, with secular disposition and with many strong vigorous passions—surely we can really not be expected to become like Christ, or, if it is expected of us, we know that it is impossible. On the contrary, Paul says, " We all," " We all." Every Christian has that for a destiny : to be changed into the image of his Lord. And he not only says so, but in this one verse he reveals to us the mode of becoming like Christ, and a mode, as we shall find, so simple and so infallible in its working that a man cannot understand it without renewing his hope that even he may one day become like Christ.

In order to understand this simplest mode of sanctification we must look back at the incident that we have already read from the book of Exodus. Paul had been reading it just as we have been reading it ; he had read how when Moses came down from the mount where he had been speaking with God his face shone, shone so as to dazzle and alarm those who were near him. They at once recognised that that was the glory of God reflected from him ; and just as it is almost as difficult for us to look at the reflected sun from a mirror as to look directly at the sun, so these men felt it almost as difficult to look straight at the face of Moses as to look straight at the face of God. But Moses was a wise man, and he showed his wisdom in this instance as well as elsewhere. He knew that that glory was only on the skin of his face, and that of course it would pass away. It was a material shining. And accordingly he put a veil over

his face, that the children of Israel might not see it dying out from minute to minute and from hour to hour, because he knew these Israelites, knew them thoroughly, and he knew that when they saw the glory dying out they would say, "God has forsaken Moses. We need not attend to him any more. His authority has gone, and the glory of God's presence has gone from him." So Moses wore the veil that they might not see the glory dying out. But whenever he was called back to the presence of God he took off the veil and received a new access of glory on his face, and thus went from glory to glory.

"That," says Paul, "is the very way, that is precisely the process through which we Christian men become like Christ." We go back to the presence of Christ with unveiled face; and as often as we stand in His presence, as often as we deal in our spirit with the living Christ, so often do we take on a little of His glory. The glory of Christ is His character—His character; and as often as we stand before Christ, and think of Him, and realise what He was, our heart goes out and reflects some of His character. And that reflection, that glory, is not any longer merely on the skin of the face; as Paul wishes us to recognise, it is a spiritual glory, it is wrought by the Spirit of Christ upon our spirit, and it is we ourselves that are changed from glory to glory into the very image of the Lord.

Now obviously this mode of sanctification has extraordinary recommendations. In the first place, it is absolutely simple. If you go to this priest, this spiritual director, this minister of the Gospel, this

friend, and ask them what you are to do if you wish to become a holy man, why, the mildest, of them will tell you to read certain books, to spend so much time in prayer and reading your Bible a day, to go regularly to church, to engage in this and that good work. If you go to others of them, if you go to a spiritual director of the middle-age time, such as were in the middle ages of this world's history and of the history of Christianity, he will tell you that you must retire from the world altogether, very likely, in order to become holy. Paul says, "Away with all that nonsense!" We are living in a real world; Christ lived in a real world: Christ did not retire from men. And he says all that you have to do in order to be like Christ is to carry His image with you in your heart. That is all. To be with Him, to let Him stand before you and command your love, and you will infallibly be changed into His image. I do not know that we sufficiently recognise the simplicity of Christian methods. We do not understand what Paul meant by proclaiming it as the religion of the spirit, as a religion superior to everything mechanical and external. Think of the deliverance it was for him who had grown up under a religion which commanded him to go a long journey three times a year, to take the best of his goods and offer them in the Temple, to comply with a multitude of oppressive observances and ordinances. Think of our advantages! Why, in those times a man must have despaired of becoming a holy man; and now Paul says you will infallibly become holy if you learn this easy lesson of carrying the Lord Jesus with you in your heart.

Another recommendation of this method is that it is so obviously grounded on our own nature. No sooner are we told by Paul that we must act as mirrors of Christ than we recognise that nature has made us to be mirrors, that we cannot but reflect what is passing before us. You are walking along the street, and a little child runs before a carriage ; you shrink back as if you were in danger. You see a man fall from a scaffolding, crushed ; your face takes on an expression of pain, reflecting what is passing in him. You go and spend an evening with a man much stronger much purer, much higher, than yourself, and you come away knowing yourself a stronger and a better man. Why ? Because you are a mirror ; because you have reflected in your inmost nature, you have responded to and reflected, the good that was in him. Look into any family, and what do you see ? You see the boy, not imitating consciously, but taking on, his father's looks and attitudes and ways ; and as the boy grows up these become his own looks and attitudes and ways, He has reflected his father from one degree of proficiency unto another, from one intimacy, from one day's observation of his father, to another, until he is the image of the old man over again, as every one says.

"Just so," says Paul, "live you with Christ, learn to carry His image with you, learn to adore Him, learn to love Him, and infallibly, whether you will or not, by this simple method you will become Christ over again ; you will become conformed, as God means you to become conformed, to the image of His Son."

Well, then, that has been tested by the experience of thousands ; and it has been found to be a true method.

Every one who spends but two minutes in the morning in the observation of Christ, every one who will be at the pains just to let the image of Christ rise before him and to remember the purity, the unworldliness, the heavenliness, the godliness of Jesus Christ, that man is the better for his exercise of it. And you who live in a city like this know how utterly useless it is to offer any other method of sanctification whatever to thousands and thousands and thousands of our fellow-citizens. How can many of our fellow-citizens secrete themselves for prayer? If you ask them to go and pray as you pray in your comfortable home, if you ask them to read the Bible before they go out at five or six o'clock in the morning, do you expect that your word will be followed? Why, the thing is impossible. But ask a man to carry Christ with him in his mind, that is a thing he can do; and if he does it once, if only once the man sees Christ before him, realises that this living Person is with him, and remembers the character of Christ as it is written for us in the Gospels, that man knows that he has made a step in advance, knows that he is the better for it, knows that he does reflect for a little, even though it be but for a little, the very image of the Lord Jesus Christ: and other people know it also.

Now, if that is so, there are obviously three things that we must do. We must, in the first place, learn to associate with Christ. I say that even one reflection does something, but we need to reflect Christ constantly, continually, if we are to become like Him. For it is almost like the figure that Paul uses? When Do you remember

you pass away from a mirror the reflection goes. In the case of Moses the reflection stayed for a little, and that is perhaps a truer figure of what happens to the Christian who sets Christ before him and reflects Him. But very often as soon as Christ is not consciously remembered you fall back to other remembrances and reflect other things. You go out in the morning with your associates, and they carry you away; you have not sufficiently impressed upon yourself the image of Christ yet. Therefore we must learn to carry Christ with us always, as a constant Companion. Some one says that is impossible. No one says that is impossible who is living in absence from any one he loves. What happens when we are living far separated from some one we love? This happens: that their image is continually in our minds. At the most unexpected times that image rises, and especially if we are proposing to ourselves to do what that person would not approve. At once their image rises to rebuke us and to hold us back. So that it is not only possible to carry with us the image of Christ: it is absolutely certain that we should carry that image with us if only we give Him that love and reverence which is due from every child of woman, from every man, that is born into this world. Who has done for us what Christ has done? Who commands our reverence as He does? If once He gets hold of our affection, it is impossible that He should not live constantly in our hearts. And if we say that persons deeply immersed in business cannot carry Christ with them thus, remember what He Himself says: "If any man love Me, he will keep My commandments;

and he that keepeth My commandments, My Father will love him, and will manifest Himself unto him"; "My Father and I will come unto him." So that He is most present with the busiest and with those who strive as best they can to keep this command.

But we must not only associate with Christ and make Him our constant company: we must, in the second place, set ourselves square with Christ. You know that if you look into a mirror obliquely, if a mirror is not set square with you, you do not see yourself, but what is at the opposite angle, something that is pleasant or something that is disagreeable to you; it matters not—you cannot see yourself. And unless we as mirrors set ourselves perfectly square with Christ, we do not reflect Him, but maybe reflect things that are in His sight monstrous. And, in point of fact, that is what happens with most of us, because it is here that we are chiefly tried. All persons almost brought up within the Christian Church pay some attention to Christ. We too well understand His excellence and we too well understand the advantages of being Christian men not to pay some attention to Christ. But that will not make us conform to His image. In order to be conformed to the image of Christ we must be wholly His. Suppose you visit the studio of a celebrated artist, will he hand you his brush to finish his canvas? Suppose you enter a studio where a sculptor is working, will he hand you his hammer and chisel to finish the most difficult piece of his work or to do any part of it? Assuredly not. It is his own idea that he is working out, and none but his own hand can work it out. So with us

who are moulded by Christ. Christ cannot mould us into His image unless we are wholly His. Every stroke that is made upon us by the chisel and mallet of the world is lost to His ideal. As often as we reflect what is not purely Christian, so often do we mar the image of Christ.

Now how is it with us? Need we ask? When we go along the street, what is it that we reflect? Do we not reflect a thousand things that Christ disapproves? What is it that our heart responds to when we are engaged in business? Is it to appeals that this world makes to us? Is it the appeal that a prospect of gain makes to us that we respond to eagerly? That is what is making us; that is what is moulding and making us the men that we are destined to be. We are made what we are destined to be, we are moulded into the character that we are destined to live with for ever and ever, by our likings and dislikings, by the actual response that we are now giving day by day to the things that we have to do with in this world. That is a fact; there is no way out of it. We may loathe the character of the sensualist; no language is too strong for us when we speak of him: but if we, in point of fact, respond to appeals made to the flesh rather than appeals made to the spirit, we become the sensuous. We may loathe and despise the character of the avaricious worldly man; we may see its contemptibility; we may see its littleness, and pettiness, and greed, and selfishness: but do our own hearts go out in response to any offer of gain more eagerly than they go out to Christian work or to the interests of Christ's kingdom? Then we are becoming worldly

and avaricious ; we are becoming the very kind of men that we despise.

Of course we know this. We know that we are being made by what we respond to, and the older we grow we know it the more clearly ; we see it written on our own character that we have become the kind of men that we little thought one day we should become, and we know that we have become such men by responding to certain things, and not by responding to the things of the Spirit. Never was a truer word said than that he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, and he only that soweth to the Spirit shall reap life. That is what in other terms Paul here says. He says, " If you set yourselves square with Christ, you will become like Him ; that is to say, if you find your all in Him, if you can be absolutely frank and honest with Him, if you can say, 'Mould and fashion me according to Thy will ; lead me according to Thy will ; make me in this world what Thou wilt ; do with me what Thou wilt : I put myself wholly at Thy disposal ; I do not wish to climb, to see past Christ's figure to some better thing beyond or to some other thing beyond ; I give myself wholly and freely to Him '—the man that says this, the man that does this, he will certainly become like to Him. But the man who even when he prays knows that he has desires in his heart that Christ cannot gratify, the man that never goes out from his own home or never goes into his own home without knowing that he has responded to things that Christ disapproves—how can that man hope to be like Him ? "

We must then associate with Christ, and we must

set ourselves squarely, we must be absolutely true in our entire and absolute devotion. Surely no man thinks that this is a hardship; that his nature and life will be restricted by giving himself wholly to Christ? It is only, as every Christian will tell you—it is only when you give yourself entirely to Christ that you know what freedom means; that you know what it is to live in this world afraid of nothing. Superior to things that before you were afraid of and anxious about, you at length learn what it is to be a child of God. Let no man think then that he lames his nature and makes his life poorer by becoming entirely the possession of Christ.

But, thirdly, we must set Christ before us and live before Him with unveiled face. "We all with unveiled face reflecting as in a mirror." Throw a napkin over a mirror, and it reflects nothing. Perfect beauty may stand before it, but the mirror gives no sign. And this is why in a dispensation like ours, the Christian dispensation, with everything contrived to reflect Christ, to exhibit Christ, the whole thing set a-going for this purpose of exhibiting Christ, we so little see Him. How is it that two men can sit at a communion table together, and the one man is lifted to the seventh heaven and sees the King in His beauty; the other only envies his neighbour his vision? Why is it that in the same household two persons will pass through identically the same domestic circumstances, the same events, from year to year—the one sees Christ everywhere; the other grows sullen, sour, indifferent? Why is it? Because the one wears a veil that prevents him from seeing Christ;

the other lives with unveiled face. How was it that the Psalmist, in the changes of the seasons even, in the mountain, in the sea, in everything that he had to do, found God? How was it that he knew that even though he made his bed in hell he would find God? Because he had an unveiled face; he was prepared to find God. How is it that many of us can come into church and be much more taken up with the presence of some friend than with the presence of Christ? The same reason still: we wear a veil; we do not come with unveiled face prepared to see Him. And when we ask ourselves, "What, in point of fact, is the veil that I wear? What is it that has kept me from responding to the perfect beauty of Christ's character? I know that that character is perfect; I know that I ought to respond to it; I know that I ought to go out eagerly towards Christ and strive to become like Him: why do I not do it?" we find that the veil that keeps us from responding thus to Christ and reflecting Him is not just like the mere dimness of a mirror that the bright and warm presence of Christ Himself would dry; it is like an incrustation that has been growing and growing out from our hearts all our life long, and that now is impervious, so far as we can see—impervious to the image of Christ. How can hearts steeped in worldliness reflect this absolutely unworldly, this heavenly, Person?

When we look into our hearts, what do we find in point of fact? We find a thousand things that we know have no right there; that we know to be wrong. How can such hearts reflect this perfect purity of Christ? Well, we must see to it that these hearts be

cleansed; we must hold ourselves before Christ until from very shame these passions of ours are subdued, until His purity and His perfectness works its way into our hearts through all obstructions; and we must keep our hearts, we must keep the mirror, free from dust, free from incrustations, once we have cleansed it.

In some circumstances you might be tempted to say that really it is not so much that there is a veil on the mirror as that there is no quicksilver at all behind. You meet in life characters so thin, so shallow, that every good thought seems to go through and out of them at the other side; they hear with one ear, and it goes out at the other. You can make no impression upon them. There is nothing to impress, and so there is no character there to work upon. They are utterly indifferent to spiritual things, never give a thought to their own character, never have tasted for themselves the reality of the grace that is in Christ. What is to be done with these? God is the great Teacher of us all; God, in His providence, has made many a man who has begun life as shallow and superficial as man can be—has made him deep enough before He has done with him.

In closing just let me mention two particulars in which the perfectness of this method appears. First of all, it is perfect in this: that any one who begins it is bound to go on to the end. The very nature of the case leads him to go on and on from glory to glory, back and back to Christ, until the process is actually completed, and he is like Christ. The reason of that is this: that the Christian conscience is never much taken

up with attainment made, but always with attainment that is yet to be made. And you know that this is true, say of a likeness of a friend that is sent to you. A friend has been away in Australia for ten years, and he sends you his likeness, and you take it out eagerly, and you say, "Yes, the eyes are the very eyes; the brow, the hair, are exactly like," but there is something about the mouth that you do not like, that is not your friend, and you thrust it away in a drawer and never look at it again. Why? Because the one point of unlikeness destroys the whole to you. Just so when any Christian presents himself before Christ it is not the points of likeness, supposing there are any which strike his conscience—it is the remaining points of difference that inevitably strike him, and so he is urged on and on from one degree of proficiency to another until the process is completed, because there is no point at which a man has made a sufficient attainment in the likeness of Christ. There is no point at which Christ draws a line and says, "You will do well if you reach this height, and you need not strive further." Why, we should be dissatisfied, we should throw up our allegiance to Christ, if He treated us so. He is our ideal, and it is resemblance to Him that draws us and makes us strive forward; and so a man is bound to go on, and on, and on, still drawn on to his ideal, still rebuked by his shortcomings, until he is perfectly resembling Christ.

And remember that this character of Christ that is our ideal is not assumed by Him for the nonce. He did not change His nature when He came to this earth; he did not put on this character to set us an

example. The things that He did, He did because it was His nature to do them. He came to this world because His love would not let Him stay away from us. It was His nature that brought Him here, and it is His nature to be what He is, and so His character is to become our nature; it is to be so wrought in us that we cannot give it up. It is our eternal character, and so any amount of pains is worth spending on the achievement of it.

The second point of perfectness lies here. You know that in painting a likeness or cutting out a bust one feature often may be almost finished while the rest are scarcely touched, but in standing before a mirror the whole comes out at once. Now we often in the Christian life deal with ourselves as if we were painters and sculptors, not as if we were mirrors: we hammer and chisel away at ourselves to bring out some resemblance to Christ in some particulars, thinking that we can do it piecemeal. We might as well try to feed up our body piecemeal; we might as well try to make our eye bright without giving our cheek colour and our hands strength. The body is a whole, and we must feed the whole and nourish the whole if any one part of it is to be vigorous.

So it is with character. The character is a whole, and you can only deal with your character as a whole. How is it when we have tried the other process? Sometimes we set ourselves to subdue a sin or cultivate a grace. Well, candidly say what has become of this. Judging from my own experience, I would say that this comes of it: that in three or four days you forget what sin it was that you were trying to

subdue. The temptation is away, and the sin is not there, and you forget all about it. That is the very snare of sin. Or you become a little better in a point that you were trying to cultivate. In that grace you are a shade improved. But that only brings out more astoundingly your frightful shortcoming in other particulars. Now, adopting Paul's method, this happens: Christ acts on our character just as a person acts upon a mirror. The whole image is reflected at once. How is it that society moulds a man? How can you tell in what class in society a man has been brought up? Not by one thing, not by his accent, not by his bearing, not by his conduct, but by the whole man. And why? Because a man does not consciously imitate this or that feature of the society in which he is brought up, does not do it consciously at all; he is merely reflecting it as a mirror, and society acts on him as a whole, and makes him the man he is. "Just so," says Paul. "Live with Christ, and He will make you the man that you are destined to be."

One word in conclusion. I suppose there is no one here who at one time or other has not earnestly desired to be of some use in the world. Perhaps there are few who have not even definitely desired to be of some use in the kingdom of Christ. As soon as we recognise the uniqueness of Christ's purpose and the uniqueness of His power in the world, as soon as we recognise that all good influence and all superlatively dominant influence proceeds from Him, and that really, really the hope of this race lies in Jesus Christ—as soon as we realise that, as soon as we see that with our reason, and not as a thing that we have

been taught to believe, as soon as we lay hold on it for ourselves, we cannot but wish to do something to forward His purposes in the world. But as soon as we form the wish we say, "What can we do? We have not been born with great gifts; we have not been born in superior positions; we have not wealth; we are shut off from the common ways of doing good: we cannot teach in the Sabbath-school; we cannot go and preach; we cannot go and speak to the sick; we cannot speak even to our fellow at the desk. What can we do?" We can do the best thing of all, as of course all the best things are open to every man. Love, faith, joy, hope, all these things, all the best things, are open to all men; and so here it is open to all of us to forward the cause of Christ in the most influential way possible, if not in the most prominent way. What happens when a person is looking into say a shop window where there is a mirror, and some one comes up behind, some one he knows? He does not look any longer at the image; he turns to look at the person whose image is reflected. Or suppose he sees reflected on the mirror something very becoming, something very striking: he does not content himself with looking at the image; he turns and looks at the thing itself. So it is always with the persons that you have to do with. If you become a mirror to Christ, your friends will detect it in a very few days; they will see in you, the mirror, an image coming out that they know has not been originated in you, and they will turn to look straight at the Person that you are reflecting. It is in that way that Christianity passes from man to man.

I wish I could think that Christianity as proclaimed from this pulpit was one tenth, one hundredth, part as effectual as Christianity proclaimed in the character and life. Do you suppose a man could live opposite you and see you day by day acting a Christian part and becoming liker and liker to Christ without having it written deeply upon his spirit that there is a living Christ, and that there is a real grace proceeding from Him to this world? And when men have got the belief that Christ is really alive, and that He is really imparting grace to men now, they have got the whole of Christianity.

May God bless His word.

BEFORE THE CROSS.

By the Rev. J. Oswald Dykes, D.D.*

"Sitting down, they watched Him there."—St. Matt. xvii. 36.

SOME of us, I daresay, remember when abroad wandering along the highway until at a place where two roads met we came upon a weather-beaten figure by the wayside, a figure of one nailed to a cross, and before it in the dust we have seen the grey-haired peasant kneel on his way home from daily toil, and the market-woman with her basket. For the careworn and weary hearts of those simple folk that harsh ungainly crucifix blushed with the setting sun, and spoke of a love that never grows old and of a Divine sorrow which has made God in heaven to be a fellow-sufferer with the meanest upon earth. We have other reminders and better reminders than that. Our Lord has been at pains to secure that His crucifixion shall never fade away from the memory; that it never shall be long absent from the thoughts of His people. Four records of it stand on the sacred page; Christendom is filled with the echoes of it. The holy eucharistic rite is a monument set up by Christ's own

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hand to force upon our attention that awful event at Jerusalem. There for ever He seems to hang, in view of all the ages, the most mournful and yet the most comforting of all earthly spectacles. It calls upon us, this spectacle of the cross, as we press forward on our road of life, dusty and wayworn, to stop and gaze, to ponder and to pray.

But we are all of us, brethren, too apt to be heedless wanderers; we are absorbed in our business or in our play; we want to have this sobering spectacle of love and pity thrust upon our sight, because the cross will not reveal its inner meaning to careless observers, not if you hurry past it, not even if you look with unpurged eyes or come to it with a cold mood, void of love: it asks for study, pains, and prayer. To a true watcher by it the cross of Calvary is the one spot of light and consolation for our unhappy race. And yet with what different eyes is it regarded by many around us, by many even of ourselves in this little congregation to-night! With what different eyes did men actually gaze upon it on that spring day when the sun of Syria was eclipsed! Some then were heedless, and some were puzzled, while to many who loved Him well it seemed the saddest and at the same time the strangest of all sights. Was there that day so much as one whom love and confidence had taught to pierce beneath the shame and sorrow of it to the mystery of glory which lay at its very heart?

I want to gather you this evening for a few minutes in imagination to the cross foot; I want you to join yourselves to those watchers by the cross; and let us see what it said to them, what it has to say to us.

Surely we shall all of us see more in this sight than did those four Roman soldiers of whom St. Matthew tells us in the words of my text: "And sitting down, they watched Him there." More we shall see, and with other eyes than theirs, for it was only with dry eyes and a languid professional interest that these foreigners could watch how the Jew died. A welcome relief it had been in the morning from barrack routine, giving rest from the fatigue-duty of the day, to bait with cruel mischief this inoffensive Hebrew and laugh over His harmless pretension to be a King. Even that grew stale, and when they were tired of their sport and had settled the important matter of a fair division of His clothes, what remained to while away the tedious hours of execution but to sit down and watch Him there? Too cold, too rude, were the hearts of those poor fellows, who knew not what they did, the coarse, unconscious tools with which Roman justice executed that day its bad work. With a little more insight and a little keener sympathy did their superior officer sit there and watch with them. The centurion in command was a foreigner likewise, but he had learned enough in Judæan society about this so-called Prophet and Messiah to take more than a merely official interest in the proceedings. While he observed Him, too, the behaviour of the Man awed him by degrees into respect, and stirred in his mind a wonder who or what this Man might be.

Let us look for a moment through his eyes. To such an end has come so good a life! A kind, and brave, and gentle-hearted Man He was, even if He were no more. Only yesterday He was the darling of

the populace, for He spent His blameless days in going about among them doing good. It was because He stood up for the common people that the rabbis detested Him so, but where are the common people now? Where are all His Galilean supporters and the crowds who shouted, "Hosanna!" a week ago? Are there none here of all the numerous sick whom He is said to have cured, none whose friends He restored to reason or raised as though from the dead? Why is He hanging there forsaken to-day? Such is the fate of your reformer, your philanthropist; a victim, on the one hand, to the jealousy of the privileged orders whom he had the courage to assail; a victim, on the other hand, to the fickle ingratitude of the public whom he befriended. It is always the way. Yes, but see how strangely this Man takes it. All the morning He has not made one single effort to rally His adherents; He has not uttered a single sound in protest, remonstrance, or complaint. No, He has not exhibited, that I could see, any emotion of surprise, of indignation, of disappointment. How is this? Does He know there is no chance of a reaction in His favour? But even then what self-control is required to take it all so passively! Is this stoicism or is it magnanimity? Surely His silent fortitude is sublime! His endurance and nobility of spirit seem more than human; He bears His misfortunes, this Man, like a God!

So far it was possible for this intelligent watcher to go, but no further, since he stood outside the circle of Hebrew belief and knowledge. Some were watching there, however, who had come a good deal closer to the mysterious Sufferer and seen a good deal more of

Him. There were many Jews who had followed the whole career of Jesus from the beginning with profound interest, not without a silent hope in their hearts, more or less decided, that He might turn out in the end to be the long-looked-for Deliverer whom He professed to be. He seemed in many ways to stand far above the vulgar, false messiahs of His time. He struck, one could see, such a lofty note, He lived so pure and elevated a life, His teaching was so pregnant, His manners were so simple and unworldly, there sat upon Him so meek a majesty, yet withal He advanced such astounding claims and sustained them with deeds of unquestionable power. All this could not fail to attract the notice of thoughtful men, and it bred in a widening circle of sincere Hebrews the hope that a Prophet thus mighty in deed and word before God and all the people would really turn out to be the one who should redeem Israel. Men of this temper watched Him die that Friday afternoon with a dim sickening sense of despair. It was not simply one more disappointment after so many of the long-deferred hope of Israel ; it was worse than that. It seemed to paralyse one's faith in God, one's faith in human nature, that such a Man as this, this Jesus of Nazareth, should turn out to be nothing but a vulgar impostor after all. Was that possible? But if not, how can you explain this closing scene? Does God abandon a genuine Messiah in His hour of need? Did He raise our hopes in this Man only to dash them? If such a wonder-working Prophet as this, such a majestic, blameless, meek, and gracious figure as this, cannot save His own life, if He is an impostor,

dare we ever look for any real saviour or deliverer elsewhere? Then is Israel forsaken indeed, if her God has forsaken her.

There must have been a good many in Israel that day, private and obscure hangers-on of the Crucified, who had not declared themselves either for or against Him very openly, who could do no more than the two at Emmaus did: start these questions in despair, not answer them. Could His Apostles not answer them, such men as this Evangelist, Matthew, for instance, men who had shared Jesus' private hours down even until this very morning, men who were at His side during last evening's supper and in the midnight retreat where they arrested Him? Do they not know that their Master could defend Himself if He chose? Let them tell us, as together we watch Him die, what they know. Surely again and again has Jesus spoken of His approaching death, spoken of it as inevitable, spoken of it as part and parcel of His career as Messiah. Only last night He foretold it in the upper room, the trial, desertion, capture, just as it has come to pass. When they took Him Matthew heard Him with his own ears say, "Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech My Father, and He shall even now send Me more than twelve legions of angels?" How then should the Scripture be fulfilled that thus it must be? This Man goes to His fate, it is plain, with His hands self-tied, of His own free will. He would not let a sword be drawn in His defence; He would not pray a prayer for celestial succour before His judges; He would not say one word to bespeak their clemency. There was no bating of His awful pre-

tensions, for before the Sanhedrin He accepted this very morning the title of Messiah, Son of God; and He added, "I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven." There was then no decay of confidence in His own Divine origin, and spiritual office, and superhuman authority, or the tremendous claims He had been accustomed to make in public and private; but there was a most deliberate persistent declinature to avail Himself of any means of deliverance ordinary or extraordinary, a resolute yielding up of Himself to suffer everything which His enemies chose to inflict. He spoke, in fact, like a man in the bonds of destiny. The hour, He said, had come, and He went submissively to meet His fate. It was not that He could not save Himself; quite clearly it was that He would not try.

We therefore, as we sit now and watch Him on the cross remembering these things, can understand a little better than the centurion that remarkable silence and composure of His. It is not pride refusing to own defeat. He is not really defeated. It is more than magnanimity under misfortune, because the misfortune is of His own choosing. While His enemies congratulate themselves that they have got their way at last, He can afford to be serene, since in truth they are only working out as unconscious instruments the very doom He has anticipated, foretold, prepared Himself to meet, from the very first.

Now for such a strange surrender of Himself to be put to death Jesus must have strong reasons of His own. It does not follow that those who sit and watch

Him can understand His reasons. No. We have not found Him at all easy to understand. Did any one understand Him when of late He set His face steadfastly, as you remember, to go up from a safe retreat in Galilee to the perils in Jerusalem? How often has this Man's conduct baffled His best friends, as when Peter, for example, ventured to remonstrate with Him on His anticipation of this bloody tragedy—"That be far from Thee, Lord"—and got nothing but a rebuke for his pains. With this mysterious Man it is always the unexpected that happens. Who expected to see Him hang like that, naked and dying, on a cross? Who knows what He means by it?

If any one of the select band of His intimates might be expected to read their Master's secret heart, it is surely John, the favourite, the most intimate of them all. John is watching here at the cross. When will the heavy hours go by? One wonders what he sees. Perhaps from his memoirs of the event, although he wrote them a great while after, something may yet be gathered. John was personally acquainted with the high-priest, and had access to official sources of information. He knew the theory on which Caiaphas in secret counsel had advised the Government to sacrifice Jesus. It had been put as a patriotic duty to offer a single life as a victim to the suspicion of a Roman overlord rather than by letting the movement go too far provoke their foreign masters to put down Hebrew nationality altogether. Can it be, is it possible, that Jesus Himself sympathises with this view of the situation? Is He patriot enough to accept the *rôle* of a victim to imperialism? Scarcely.

John knows well enough that his Master's claim constituted no real political danger. That very day John had been watching most narrowly the painful and prolonged efforts of the Roman governor to save His person; he had satisfied himself by watching Pilate keenly that the Roman feared nothing, even as in truth he had nothing to fear, from a shadowy kingdom which abjured the power of the sword. The plea of Caiaphas then was not sincere. It was merely a pretext on the part of that wily pontiff to disguise his real spite against the Prophet of Nazareth. For all that, had not John heard his dear Master use language again and again which bore a startling resemblance to the suggestion of Caiaphas? Did He not speak once some months ago in the corridor of the Temple about Himself as a Shepherd of Israel, who, instead of fleecing the people like the false prophets, meant to offer His own life to the wolf, that the scattered children of God might be collected and kept in safety? Is that what He is doing now? More singular still, He spoke then of His self-sacrifice as actually a duty which He owed to God and a free-will act of His own doing. That will explain much to-day. And other dark utterances rose to recollection, in the memorable Capernaum sermon, for example, about the manna, just a year ago. How He scandalised the people by talking of His own flesh and blood as given to be eaten for the life of the world. That was a hard saying at the time. May it not shed some light upon this cross now? Nay, when one thinks of it, did He not use the very same language no further agone than last night at the passover supper? All His talk then

was to comfort us because He was going away, He told us. How little we thought it was in this awful fashion He was to be taken away ; yet He told us plainly while He broke the loaf it was thus His flesh was to be rent, and see how His dark wine-like blood is flowing now! How then did He explain the meaning of this deliberate and bloody close to His career? Did He not say that His body was to be broken for us, and His blood shed for the remission of our sins? Did He not invite us to feed upon the bread and the wine after He was dead? Ah, then He is Himself the true paschal Lamb, the innocent Victim slain like the passover lamb of yesterday for the errors of the people ; and the meaning of His self-oblation as He hangs there unresisting must just be this : that He perceives somehow He cannot otherwise propitiate for the sins of His followers or give to them eternal life.

In the dawn of his own spiritual history St. John had been a penitent scholar of the great Baptist ; and in the vast laver of the Jordan he began by seeking to cleanse his conscience with the cleansing which he found it could not give him, and the words which first sent him to Jesus of Nazareth had been these great words : "Behold the Lamb of God, which beareth away the sin of the world." How was it that these words never disclosed their full significance, never until now? God's Lamb, verily! For that we knew Him all the while, for sweet godliness and stainless innocence and incomparable meekness. Oh, how the beauty of this Man's character endeared Him to the heart of John! But a lamb that bears sin away must be a

sacrificed lamb, slaughtered because unblemished, meek indeed, but meek and dumb in death, the victim for the priests to offer.

And see how they are offering Him to-day. How silently He hangs there, supreme in faith, a bleeding Lamb now! Ah, priest Caiaphas, how much more do thy words mean than thou knowest! This holy, lamb-like Victim, whom thou and thy fellow-priests are offering up to political necessity, or to class rancour, or to private hate, is self-offered in a holier cause, not to save Judæan nationality, but to propitiate for the sin of the whole earth.

Yes, here is the key, the only one, that will unlock the riddle. Say that He is giving up His pure life to God as a spontaneous Victim for the guilt of His people, and see if that will not explain it all. How significant become then the attendant circumstances! It will account for His strange passibility, His silence, which the centurion found so strange, for, as Isaiah wrote long ago, He is led like a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so, in token of meek consent, Jesus, you see, opens not His mouth. It explains—does it not?—the refusal to beg for celestial cohorts to rescue Him, for, as He said Himself, to lay down His life is a commandment He has received from the Father. See, ah see, how the centurion thrusts into His heart the cruel lance! Is it not written, "They shall look on Him whom they have pierced"? No, His limbs the soldiers will not dare to break when they break the others', for how reads the law of the passover lamb? "A bone of him shall not be broken."

And thus, brethren, through that anointing which

teaches all things, we may judge it possible for John the Theologian as, with a broken heart, he watched beneath his Friend's cross that afternoon, to penetrate even then and there a little way into the great mystery of expiation that was being executed before his eyes, and learn how, as he wrote afterwards to the Church, the Son of God was manifested to bear sin by making His life a propitiation, that His blood might cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Let us not forget that close by the side of this beloved Theologian, the inner working of whose spirit we have ventured humbly to try and trace, there were standing the women who loved Jesus best, some tender hearts—few, but tender—of the mother who bore Him, and the matron who tended Him, and the saved and healed who owed Him more than life. How these stood and watched Him as He died! Not of questions of theology were their thoughts full that day, not with the how and the why of His strange sacrifice, but they were filled with the sorrow of it, filled with the pity of it. Why their Beloved needed to be so cruelly handled, why it was right and wise of Him to fling away so easily a life so precious, it was not theirs to ask. God only knows, and perhaps He who suffers it may know. But that He is bearing it all for our poor sake, as He bore suffering for us, bears it for the mighty love He has for us, and that He has not deserved one least pang of it all, not one, but we have deserved it, and He bears it for us—that at least our simple hearts may know; and at the thought a sword may pierce our own souls also. Oh, it was so good of Him! What infinite kindness made Him

stoop to bear all this for us! How meek and willing He hangeth there! How the nails tear His flesh! How the death-drop sits upon His brow! How pale His face, and He so good, so spotless, and so holy! Oh the sorrow of it, oh the love and pity of it, to think that He has to come to this to win a pardon for us!

For us, for us, my brethren! Are we, too, watching with Him here to-day, as the women did, and John, beside His cross? Can we too, brethren, can you, look through this touching story and meet His eyes as they did? Do I know that He singles me out in my sin, and loves me in it, and died to save me from it? Oh, undecaying love of God, who died for all! oh, precious blood that cleanseth all! oh, heart of man that canst be cold to One who died for thee! What sorrow that ever I have grieved my Lord, what contrition, what regret, become me for those hateful and ungoverned passions, those mean delights, those peevish or bitter tempers of my soul, which pierce the Saviour, and still are harboured within my unworthy breast! My God, who didst come down to give Thy life for me, have mercy now at last upon this hard, blind, stony heart; and ere it be too late, subdue, and melt, and win, and cleanse me for Thyself. Then will I too sit, and watch, and weep, and pray, and, with an eye no less intent nor heart less penitent than the dying thief's, will say, "In life, in death, O Lord, my Lord, remember me."

May God bless His word.

THE CHANGELESS CHRIST.

By the Very Rev. the Dean of Gloucester.*

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."—Heb. xiii. 8.

WE have here one of those inspired watchwords of a man of God which come up often with a ring of triumphant hope in hours when the soul is very heavy and sad, disappointed, disillusioned, beginning perhaps to doubt whether the old faith is a reality after all. "Yes," whispers the spirit-voice, "it is the same, only you are disheartened; He whom you have believed, He for whom you have warred and struggled, He is still there, King of kings, Lord of lords; only a little cloud veils Him for a season, and dims perhaps His radiant glory." Yes, Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Now let us quietly argue it out. How changeless? how the same for ever? Changeless, we say, in His teaching, in His person, in His work.

First, changeless in His teaching. The teaching consists of little words all contained in the few pages of a Gospel; spoken, not written; spoken to a poor crowd who very dimly grasped their meaning. Then

* Preached in St. Mary's Church, Henbury, on Sunday morning, August 21st, 1892.

as the hearers began to understand something of the deep, beautiful signification of the words some of them wrote them down and told them out to others ; those others received them because they were beautiful as true. It was a poor Jew of Palestine who spoke them first, and the words were coloured with Eastern imagery, Eastern thoughts ; but Western nations received them joyfully : they seemed to be spoken just as directly to them ; the framework they heeded not, for the words seemed so real. They found equally an echo, did His words, in the hearts of wild, journeying tribes, as in the hearts of the dwellers by Jordan.

Then time seems to have had nothing to do with these words and their sweet, sad, beautiful meaning : they were welcomed when a Tiberius or a Nero lived at Rome, or when a Constantine ruled, hundreds of years later, in the new Rome of the Bosphorus ; or now when the loved English queen reigns by the Thames. Yes, the strange sweet words spoken by the unknown Teacher of Galilee are independent of race, place, time. Look at them for an instant closer. Has any portion of His teaching—it is now just two thousand years old—has any portion of it grown old, out of date? Can it be termed old-fashioned? Can you lay your finger on a part of the Mount Sermon and say, "This belongs to the East, not to the West ; this belongs to Oriental thought and life, not to the more vigorous Western peoples"? Can you say that His parables, those Eastern stories, with their sublime lessons, so full of wisdom and generosity, coloured with what we should call chivalry in its highest sense

and noblest meaning—can we say that the parables are more the rightful heritage of Cairo and Damascus than of Bristol or Liverpool? His words taught men how to live, showed men how to die with a smile on their lips, in the days of the great Cæsars; they have lost nothing of their old ring, nothing of their majestic, tender grace, in this restless evening—is it the evening?—of the world's long story. His words, they inspire high thoughts and noble deeds, they fire hearts with a devoted, impassioned love, they make selfish men generous, coward hearts brave in true and knightly warfare, now as then. Two thousand summers and winters, with their weary wear and tear, have neither weakened their force nor dimmed their beauty, changeless in the midst of change, life-giving where all around seems dying. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away."

So much for the changeless power of His teaching.

Now for His person. Changeless here too, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Here in His blessed person must we seek, and I believe find, the secret of the strange power of the words we have just been speaking of, the power which time fails to dim. Who spoke these changeless words? The Speaker—He tells us so Himself; He made no pretence of concealment; He was ever ready with profound and supernatural action to back His mighty assertion—the Speaker was no mere master, no mere teacher: He by no means confined Himself to the part of a revealer; He appeared as the revelation; He said, "Oh My people, believe My words; believe in My teaching," but He said with greater emphasis by far, "Believe

Me; believe in Me." Sublime and generous, noble and sweet, as was His teaching, it was not His first or even chief object in coming among us. It was Himself: it was to make men know Him, turn their thoughts to Him; He was the ideal, the One to be imitated, copied followed by all; He was, too, the mighty Being, at once Creator and Lover of men, who was to be adored by all. It is true that you and I must try to imitate Him, try to copy His glorious, saintly life, try to reproduce, if possible, His awful sacrifice for others; but you and I must remember that He, and only He, can give men power to wish for and then to do this. And the blessed person at once to be imitated and adored has, remember, undergone no change. Just as it was brought forth by the first simple listeners of the Christ in the first century, just as it was painted in its inimitable touching beauty by a John or a Paul, just so do we possess it now, admire it, try to imitate it, adore it, hunger after it, now. After all these centuries of progress and of change, after generation upon generation, from Celsus to Voltaire, from Marcion to Renan, and the new cheerless Oxford school, have worked their sad will, have argued against it, written against it, with all human culture and all human genius, we possess it still, absolutely unchanged, with its own simplicity and grandeur and sublimity, with its old love and Divinest pity, with the perfume of the great sacrifice of self hanging yet about it as on the first Easter morning, towering now, as then, far above, every earthly image of power and of grandeur and of beauty, still the friend of friends, still the refuge and the home of every crushed and bleeding soul. Yes,

Jesus Christ in His person, as in His words, is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Lastly, the same in His work. The work—it saves, for He is the Saviour. Remember, first and chiefest, the Saviour, not the great Moralist, Teacher, Thinker, though with a moral life which lights up every page of the Gospel narrative, so sublime and perfect; not the great Exemplar, though the Hero and Saviour and Comforter who lives and breathes in every verse at once touching and eloquent of our New Testament—though the Hero and Saviour and Comforter is at once perfect, flawless; not the Moralist, Teacher, or Exemplar, but first and chiefest the Saviour, the Redeemer. Here, though the world never saw before, will never see again, like teacher, like exemplar—here is the real source of His changeless power, of His limitless influence over the souls of men and women. Jesus Christ came to teach men, it is true; He came to show men what a perfect man should be; He came at once as Teacher and Exemplar; but He came for a higher and grander work far than even these things: He came to die for men; He came to atone in some mysterious way for man's sins. Now there is a school of thought among Christian teachers which in its varied voices has a wide and ever-growing influence: it paints for us a new Christ, different from Him of the Gospels; it shrinks from the old-fashioned, evangelical truth; it tells us that the old, beautiful, true idea of redemption brought out in Calvary is an idea really hammered out, forged by men, by men possibly who were in earnest and who had seen the Christ, but still forged, hammered out, devised by men like you and

me ; it tells us, does this false but too popular school, that the real Christ was simply the Preacher of the Mount Sermon, that alone in that pure and lofty moral code must we seek and find the Gospel message, the really genuine teaching of the Galilee Master. Let me answer in a word or two this cruel dangerous attempt to mar and mutilate the old message, the only message of comfort given by God to man ; let me answer it in the thoughts, if not with the words, of a great master in religion who wrote in another land and in another tongue, and who is now, we love to think, in the bosom of God : it is thought and words which will find an echo, if not now, in some lonely hours of most of those who listen to me this bright summer morning. We cannot receive such a mutilated Gospel as this ; it is not the same Christ at all the fathers of the first century found in the Gospel story ; we will never acknowledge such a changed and powerless Messiah ; we will have Him—am I not speaking for you too?—we will have Him, and only Him, of whom the Gospels tell us, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever" ; we will have only Him of whom the Baptist at the beginning wrote, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." It is true He preached a nobler life, a purer and more austere morality, than ever had been taught before, but the central point of all His teaching was not His morality, but His death. This death was what He told Peter and the eleven about when they would have made Him a King ; this death was the subject of the words of the mysterious spirits at His transfiguration ; this death was, is, the central thought of the great

sacrament of the Lord's Supper, was, too, the subject matter of His awful prayer in Gethsemane.

How sadly too often is this lost sight of now in our modern theology : the work of the death of Christ ! Men have in all times struggled against this great central truth. We see Paul not once or twice confronted by these rejecters of the real work of his dearest Lord when he wrote such words as " The preaching of the Cross is to them that are perishing foolishness." But I appeal—an appeal that never falls dead—I appeal to the hearts of those who would put aside the central truth of the sacrifice and death of the sinless Son of God ; they may do it in health and in prosperity : they will never repeat it in sorrow and in sickness. I appeal to their hearts, and I would ask them whether Christ, the mere saintly moral Teacher, doesn't appal them, chill them with a deadly fear. If the Sermon on the Mount were, as some would now tell us, the Gospel, then the Gospel would overwhelm me—wouldn't it you too ?—with shame and fear. How hopelessly the most earnest of us falls short of His high pure standard here in thought, in deed, in word. No, I want —and don't you, brothers and sisters ?—we want a cross on which He died for us ; we want the cross to comfort and to succour our souls. The lofty sublime morality may be the delight of the angel who has never fallen, and who loathes sin as utterly vile, the dazzling whiteness of whose garment no stain has marred, no scar has flecked, but I, with my poor scarred past, my wavering present, my fearful future—I need the Jesus of the Baptist, " the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," the pitiful Master of Peter, the loved

Redeemer of Paul ; I need the Jesus of the garden of the agony, the Jesus of the cross and the tomb, the Jesus of the resurrection morning. Angels who have never sinned may be satisfied with a gospel without the sacrifice of the cross and the work of the precious blood ; but we poor, weak, frail, trembling sinners, we cling, don't we, to the old, old story of the Saviour, to the Christ who redeems us, not to the mere Teacher Jesus, but to the Saviour, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"?

VISIONS OF THE DIVINE.

By the Rev. Principal Cave, D.D.*

"When Pilate was set down on the judgment-seat, his wife sent unto him saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him."—St. Matt. xxvii. 19.

"PAINTING," said Novalis, "is the art of seeing." Certainly it is the art of enabling others to see. And I am frank to confess that in the study of great paintings I have frequently found light to be thrown upon even theological problems. For instance, a picture that I once saw, I think at Dresden, gave me most assuredly a higher conception than I had before of the Saviour's sufferings. Of course I had frequently seen those pictures of the old artists, many of which have found their way into our family Bibles, where in utter prostration the Saviour bowed beneath the weight of His cross. The hour was an hour of agony and pain and of physical prostration. But the picture that I saw and that I have in mind had a totally different view of the matter. Instead of bowing beneath the weight of the cross, the Master stepped as with the step of a conqueror. It was as

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though He felt a renewal of power at the very touch of the cross; it was as though, feeling that the great purpose for which He had come into the world was nearly achieved, there was joy in the midst of all the physical pain, and He marched, as I have said, as it were with the step of a conqueror, His great resolution almost carried to an issue—surely a truer conception of Him who "endured the cross, despising the shame." Then, too, there was a picture that I once saw at Antwerp, one of Dietrich's, that gave me a more vivid conception of the ravages of the Fall. I can see it now. Away in the picture before one, one sees the angel with the flaming sword, apparently coming right out of the picture towards us, and in front the agonised faces of our first parents as they, too, seem rushing out of the picture and out from the garden of Eden. Another picture comes to my mind that I saw in Cadiz, one of Murillo's. It was only a little child with his hand in an angel's, but then there was such a glory about the seraph and there was such a trust about the child that from that hour I have had a more intense conception of what is meant by angelic ministration.

And there is a picture, that I doubt not very many of you have seen, that may enable me just to concentrate attention upon what seems to me the germ of thought of my text. Let me describe it. In one portion of the canvas you see the disturbed bed where Pilate's wife has been lying in the vision of a fearful dream. The whole of the remainder of the canvas portrays the dream. It is as though Claudia is standing upon the stone steps of the Prætorium at the very

hour of the Saviour's humiliation. There beneath her eye she can view the rude mockery of the reed and the crown of thorns. But there as she looks the scene becomes one not for the moment, but for all time. An angel whispers into her ear, and under the guidance of the angel the scene unfolds something of its history. She sees now, beyond that circle of the weeping women and of the enervated disciples, something of the world's historical mystery in this scene upon which she is looking. There a little beyond she can see where the executioners have ceased their work that they may fall down and worship. A little further on, towards the vanishing point of the picture, you can see the towering forms of the Crusaders, now marching to battle beneath the banner of the Cross. There, too, are represented prominent leaders among the great fathers of the Church; and there, too, as you look towards the vanishing point, you can see men who have come forth from their prison-houses, the fetters of sin and selfishness snapped for ever. Yet a little further, and you may see the missionaries of the Cross; and right away in the extreme vanishing point itself it is as though earth and heaven are joined together under this same cross. I do not know what truth there is in the representation of the artist, but what I want to say is that it shows us clearly that for a little season Pilate's wife had had the ordinary current of life broken through and had come within the range of those spiritual premonitions that come to us all at times. There are times in our lives too when the ordinary current of life is broken through, and when the world supernal has its dealings

with us, and when we suddenly start amazed as the truth of the crucifixion of Jesus comes home to our spiritual natures.

I want you, with me, for a little while to-night to think upon these spiritual premonitions. Let me speak, in the first place, of those Divine visions that come to us all at times showing us our relationship with the world eternal. It is one of the common beliefs of our souls that God is not far from any one of us. We do not picture Jehovah to ourselves as, it would appear, some of the Jews did: as localised in the holy of holies. For us God is everywhere; heaven cannot contain Him, hell cannot exclude Him, and this earth is altogether too small a place for the dwelling-place of Him who inhabiteth eternity. For us God is everywhere, and wherever there is a soul in need of the Divine the great Divine Giver of spiritual life is at hand, able to speak with the soul. That is one truth; and another truth is this: that God, to speak reverently, seems to be ever on the alert to find a way back again into our estranged souls. He has His own remarkable way of dealing with each one of us; and knowing our history, knowing our foibles, knowing at the same time the peculiar difficulties of the vicious side of our nature, He seems to be ever on the alert to find the one channel of advent by which He can come into our nature.

Now there is an interesting instance of this Divine advent into the soul in the story that is before us to-night. Who could have imagined at first sight that there would have been any relations whatever between this proud Roman matron and this poor Jew,

as it looked, who might be buffeted by any soldier with impunity? Who could have imagined at first sight that this wife of a man whose position was almost regal would have anything to do with this Prisoner at the bar of her husband? Had Claudia ever heard of Jesus of Nazareth? The preceding Sunday, it is true, the children had shouted their hosannas as they had passed through into the temple of the Lord, and the whole city had been filled with the thought of the new Prophet. Had any distant echo even of that risen to her richly draped apartments? We do not know. At first sight we should have said that it was most extremely unlikely that there would be any dealings whatever between Claudia and Jesus of Nazareth. But then there came a dream—a dream so consistent in its sequence that it seemed to her a vision from the world Divine. It, was not simply an intimation that might work upon the startled body, it was not simply a dream that seemed inconsistent and incoherent, but there was something about it of such a nature that she at once regarded it as a revelation of the Divine.

The point that I have in mind is that here Claudia had come within the range of the Divine visions. My friends, biography is, after all, a sort of autobiography, and there is a very remarkable community about our natures that it is well to remember. Have you not known sometimes as you have read of some great exploit of heroism—have you not known a leaping in your own heart? Was it not, after all, our common human nature that had done this thing; and therefore was there not a sense of pride that the deed had so

been done? And when you have read some time of some terrible crime, have you not known something of the blush that has mantled your own cheek? Had you been placed in similar circumstances and under the same temptations, you might have done it. At least, it was our common human nature that had done the deed. Many of us surely have felt like that Puritan brother who, as he saw the prison van go by, said, "There goes John Bradford but for the grace of God."

Those Divine visions that came to Pilate's wife come to us to-day. Sometimes we are aroused out of happy dreams. And there is something very singular about the world of dreams. I know that at times a dream seems to be the wild wandering of the imagination when the reason is asleep. Sometimes past years are back again, with their old troubles and difficulties, or the friendships of schoolboyhood; and so we get back to the old realm of memory. Sometimes our dreams are utterly incoherent and vague; but are there not others that become in the soul's history revelations of the Divine, very real visions of the Divine? I do not want to seem fantastic, but I am bound to say that even as a pastor I have known some cases of permanent religious good produced by dreams. God has many instruments by which He works, but the point that I want to leave upon your mind is this: that the Divine vision is something much wider than this. It is not to us an important thing how God comes, but that God comes; and He chooses all sorts of channels by which He may find His way back into our estranged souls Sometimes He calls us in ways

remarkable. You remember how Martin Luther finally closes with God and comes into the realm of the inner Divine life as a thunderstorm is about him and as he hears of the sudden assassination of his dearest friend. You read perhaps of Milton how he gives himself to God from the dark terrors of a storm at sea, or perhaps some of you have read of the Chinese missionary Judson how as a young fellow he goes for a summer holiday. He puts up one evening at an inn, is told that he should be quiet, because in the next room to his a young man is dying. Tired and weary, he thinks little more of the matter, goes to sleep, and is refreshed. In the early morning at breakfast, however, he cannot but ask how the young man is doing. He has died in the night, he is told. He would like to see his face, in that sudden burst that will come to us of curiosity ; and when he sees his face, he sees that it is the bosom companion whom he himself has led into all the terrors of a fast life. And there the man gives himself to God.

So God sometimes works. But, again, my friends, the important thing is that these Divine visions that come to us from the world eternal come in their own ways. It matters not to you or to me how they come, but that they come. Would that you would understand that even the commonest event in our life may suddenly become vocal with Deity ! Would that you would understand that the commonest things that happen to us—the mere looking upon the face of a friend, receiving a letter, a little trouble that comes to us in our daily life, a sudden thought that we would fain live the righteous life, any thing, the most

trifling—may, after all, be to us the agent and angel that God has summoned to tell us of Himself. There are all sorts of ways that God uses and utilises. The important thing is that ever and anon the ordinary current of our life is broken through ; and we, the creatures of this world, creatures with the sky above us, creatures of this commonplace earth, we too, have our visions of the Divine. How I wish that I could set your thoughts wandering throughout those mazes of memory ! How sure I am that there would come to every one of you some hour or some hours when you have had your dealings with God, and when God has had His dealings with you ! How sure I am that there would have been times when you all can recall these Divine visions ! How strange a thing that sparks from the Divine should have fallen upon our souls to be quenched there ! How strange a thing that God should be interested in our life and should actually condescend to have His personal dealings with us, even with us, and we turn our backs upon our Father and Friend ! Yes, there come to us, as to young Isaiah, hours when in the temple perhaps we hear those voices singing their "Thrice Holy," and when instantly the thought comes to us, "I am a man of unclean lips." Yes, I would set your thoughts, I say, wandering throughout those mazes of memory, for perfectly sure am I that one and another and another would have his own or her own story to tell of some Divine vision that has come, showing the relationship to the world eternal.

I desire now to follow out, under the guidance of our text, these Divine visions, to learn something about

them and what we lose by ignoring them. For a time, as I have said, Pilate's wife had come within the circle of these Divine premonitions. The spiritual world was to her more real than the natural world. What was the issue of that spiritual association it is difficult for us to say. We know that her husband, too, seemed to have something of these premonitions of the Divine, but we know how afterwards he weakly held his hand when to hold his hand was to commit murder; we know how he silenced his conscience and would not allow the things that had been speaking within to have their due course and issue. Perhaps it was the same with Pilate's wife, yet who knows? I think I ought to say that we have the testimony of some of the earliest Fathers—Ambrose and Hilary and even Origen—for the Christian career of Pilate's wife. When her husband had become disgraced, had died one scarce knows where, she was well known in Christian circles for her singular endeavours for the good of others; she was called "a second Dorcas"; she gave herself to work for those for whom her Saviour died. Now how singularly harmonious it would be with God's dealings with the soul if those Divine premonitions had awakened something like compunction, and deep compunction had brought her in an attitude of penitence to the very feet of that One whom her husband crucified. I say it would be singularly in harmony with our Lord's dealings with our souls. Still all that is mere matter of history, curious and interesting though it may be. The point that weighs on my soul to-night is that God has His dealings with us; that within us to-day God is revealing to

us the spiritual world, even to us to-day; and that there come to us these hours when the same premonitions of the Divine are given to us. God Himself, in the infinitude of His compassion, comes and convinces us that He is, and then asks of us, even of us, the love of our poor hearts. How strange a thing that such Divine impressions should fail! How strange a thing that this world supernal should for a while disclose itself to us, and that we should pass it by as if it were a momentary thought! How sad it is that God should speak with us, and we should refuse to hear!

Just notice the effect of this refusing to hear in Pilate's case. I have very little doubt that when Pilate refused to hear the mood of his wife he rather took credit to himself for having nothing to do with this dream of an emotional woman. And yet afterwards, when he himself has turned away from the Lord of promise, though he too has had spiritual premonitions, see what follows: how he crucifies the Lord of life and how he has earned for himself eternal shame, possibly even eternal remorse. I would that you would understand that these dealings of God should not be treated as a mere light thing of a moment, to be laughed off at will. There is one idea that the scientific training of the age has been forcing home upon us: it is the awfulness of trivialities; it is that, after all, there is not that in life that we know enough of to call trivial. The whole of this universe seems singularly interwoven. As we look to even little things, little things are seen to have tremendous consequences. This idea of cause and effect is interwoven now with our everyday thinking; and we see, as I have said, the import-

ance of attention to little things. Ignore, for example, the common laws of sanitation, and not only do you set a hostile train of causes going that affect yourself, but even affect perhaps those yet unborn. And these interweavings of event with event, these things have come home to us in this century as I suppose they never came home before. Even biography has taught us the same thing. How little a thing may be the turning-point in a life! You remember what the mere cry of a child on the Nile gave us of the Old Testament; you remember perhaps in the career of Napoleon how at Toulon he had been plying his gun and stood back for a minute: had he remained at the touch-hole a few minutes longer, he would have been shot down, as the man was who took his place, and the whole current of our European history would have been changed. And so biography and science are saying to us that we must be careful of what we describe as trivial, and those things which seem the slightest may have behind them the most momentous of consequences.

My friends, have you realised that those dealings of God with your soul have been thought out from all eternity by Him who can dare to be slow in His processes? Are you absolutely sure that those same dealings will come again, and in the same form? Remember that when God condescends to have His dealings with you, if you slight those things, you ought to have the power of eternal forecast. Oh, I would that I could arouse your slumbering souls; and if God is dealing with you to-night and granting to you by my words, or by your own thoughts, or by

memories of the past, some vision of the Divine, I would that vision of the Divine might have its full issue and lead you to the rest, the new life, the regeneration that God is waiting to bestow upon you.

Allow me for a moment or two to call your attention to what you lose by ignoring these Divine visions. It is not a side the preacher often touches upon, but it is desirable that you should see what you lose by ignoring these visions of the Divine. We Christians dare to stand before you and say that we believe in, and are conscious of, the forgiveness of sins. If that is only a theological phrase to you, my friend, how supremely I pity you. For us to know that our sins are forgiven, and that we can raise our head beneath God's heaven forgiven by our God, is one of the dearest experiences that have been given to us in our mental history. There are hours in which there comes home to us again, with its own wonderful music, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven"; and the thought of this forgiveness has made the world to us a gladder and a brighter world. It is our Father who has painted the heavens, who has forgiven us, and wherever we may be we have the home feeling. You know something at times of the desire for that forgiveness. Yes, it comes back to me, and it is worth while remembering, though so familiar, that old story told us by Cicero so many years ago of the poor slave there who had a longing to be a king. The king hearing something about it, determines that he shall have his lesson; and so the slave is taken from his task, is robed in the royal robes, is seated on the royal

throne, is afterwards taken to the royal banquet. Courses come and go, music is heard, the tables are groaning beneath the weight of the viands and the gold and silver, and the poor slave transformed thinks he has happiness. And there, looking up, he sees above him, hanging by a single hair, a sword. True, the courses are coming as they were before; there is the same gold and silver, and the music; but the man cannot get out of his soul the thought of the sword, until presently he throws off his robes and would fain return to his position as a slave, that he may get away from the sword. My friends, you know the meaning of that sword. You have gone to your pleasure, and somehow there has been to you bitterness in the cup. God has taken care that those hours that seem to you most desirable and delightful shall be full of their own shame, nay of their own agony; and there have been times in your life when you would have been glad to get away from the thought of the sword. And we Christians, with all humility, and yet with all firmness, dare to say that we know—know by inner testimony of the Spirit that hath been given to us—that our sins are forgiven. We had rather lose health or wealth than that consciousness. And we Christians also venture to say that since we have known Jesus we have gained the enthusiasm of the ideal. Our ideals make us. The practical man, after all, has a very high ideal of a business life and a business world. And our ideals make us. Perhaps you have read of that artist in our English school of the last century who as a boy gave his friends infinite trouble. They had him at home, scarcely knew what to do with him. However,

they sent him to school. There was the same difficulty there. He seemed as if he were one of those who would never find his niche in life. But when taken to one of our large collections of pictures his soul awoke. Just as Correggio felt before the picture of Raphael, so it was with this lad: his soul awoke. His parents have left it on record that it seemed to them only a faded picture of a woman and a child, but the boy as he looked upon that picture felt that his soul had awakened. He went back full of the thought of painting; and he left himself as he died high up in the rank of our English painters, made by his ideal. So, too, I suppose many an engineer will be made as he thinks of the trials and successes of men like Stephenson and Watt; and I trust many a lad will give himself to the missionary career as he reads of men like Mackenzie, or in the older days like Moffat and Livingstone. We Christians say that life has become to us an absolutely new thing since we have known Jesus. We have gained the enthusiasm of the ideal, of that curious blending that we see in Him of power and meekness, of love and of suffering, of that curious contrast—how shall I put it?—of Deity and the Cross, and it has fired our enthusiasm, has made us feel that here at any rate is life worth living, and has also given us this further ideal: that if our lives could even faintly shadow the life of Jesus, nobody dare to deny to us the name. And so we have gained the enthusiasm of the ideal. Oh, my friend, if you would allow those Divine visions to have their due course, you too would come to Jesus of Nazareth, nay, to Jesus the King, to Jesus the

transformed One, who will become to you human and Divine, God on earth and God giving you the ideal of humanity.

Further, we Christians can say more and proceed yet beyond. We have to say that since we have known Jesus we have actually felt a new force, have experienced a new life, and known a new energy. Everything within us—I know not how to describe it, but there has come a singular change about us. We had grappled with our sins and failed, with those tendencies of our nature that are peculiar to each one of us, but to fail; but we have known a new force: there has been given to us a spiritual energy. It is not only that we have the old temptations, but thank God that in His might the old temptations have often been mastered, and we are growing into a new life! New pleasures are ours; a new atmosphere is ours. We are beginning to see that the life that men will find worthiest is not where once we thought it. We begin to see this change as of a new energy. Well, it is like this. You have seen the soil in winter, hard, ugly, black; but there are flowers hidden away in that hard black soil: and then there comes the stream of the sun at spring-time, and presently the earth leaps to new life, and you see the first flowers: the snowdrop and the aconite. The world has become beautiful because of the new life that has come. So upon our hard hearts, with something of virtue sleeping—upon our hard hearts there have come also these streaming rays from the world above us, and something of beauty—I mean of moral beauty—has been evoked. And whilst our life has become better than it was,

there are these inner experiences that tell us that we shall rise to a fulness of glory that we know not, for the very flower that we possess of it is the promise of the fruit of the heavenly world.

And you lose all that because you quench these Divine visions as they come. My friend, bethink yourself, and if God deals with your soul now, bethink yourself; for, mark you, every day you postpone this, even if God, in His mercy, should come to you again and again, you are making it harder to accept. There are consequences of your neglect, not only things that you have lost, but deliberate consequences in your own soul. The skies are growing more leaden to you, as they must; the spiritual eye is becoming dimmer, as it must; it is becoming easier to occupy yourself with the things of time and sense and neglect the heavenly world. That must be the consequence. I beseech you, if God is dealing with your soul to-night, arise and receive the blessing that He waits to give.

And then the world to come—I do not know much about it, but I know that the Bible calls it "death." Death is not life; it may be something very terrible: one knows it must be. The very language selected to tell us of the doom of those outside of Christ is very terrible. I am not to pretend to know much about it. The Bible uses, as contrasted with eternal life, "death." I am bound to think there is something fearful in the history of the soul as well as of the body.

Now Pilate's wife has actually looked or will look presently upon some such scene as the artist has depicted, passing into the heavenlier life where she

will be with the Master whom her husband crucified. And you and I, my friends, will also stand in that great revelation of the Jesus that is to be. I beseech you, look into the matter; and if you are to pass forth to that place of judgment, how will it be with you? The words are passing out of our pulpits, perhaps unwisely; but I cannot but plead with you as they are upon my soul to-night, and ask you to ask yourselves, How will it be with you?

True, there is forgiveness with God; but you must not slight these visions of the Divine, these dealings of God with your soul, these Divine premonitions. If God speaks to you, do not ignore Him. Possibly He may not come again; I know not. But I am perfectly sure that without the advent of the Spirit neither repentance nor forgiveness is possible to you. Therefore I say to you, Beware.

And yet such shall not be my closing words. I could not leave with a hard thought apparently or a hard word upon the lip. This shall be my closing word: My friend, the Gospel of Jesus I could put in a thousand ways. I will put it in this way to-night, a message to every living soul, that you may begin again; God Himself comes to you, and in His Gospel says, "I cannot forget, but I can forgive," and His forgiveness is open to you. Here is the Gospel at the outset, and daily strength for daily need ever after. Is it not a Gospel worth having? Will you not come as God pleads with your soul and accept His own marvellous note of mercy?

May God add His blessing.

WHY THIS WASTE?

By the Rev. J. M. Gibbon.*

"But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, which should betray Him, said, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?"—St. John xii. 4, 5.

IN this chapter we have Judas and Mary standing before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ. Mary is the accused; Judas is the accuser; Jesus is the Judge to whom the appeal is made. The crime that Mary has been guilty of, according to Judas, is a serious one. Under cover of sentiment, she has been guilty of an act of wanton waste. Met together in the suburbs of a city in which poor people are to be found in great abundance, she has wilfully thrown away three hundred pennyworth of ointment: a large number of meals; many a night's lodging; many garments for the poor. She has wilfully wasted quite a large quantity of money in a city where money is sorely needed. That is Judas' plea.

Now we naturally feel with regard to Judas that any opinion which he could express upon an act like that of Mary is absolutely worthless. It is of the same value as the opinion that a blind man might

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give concerning a picture or a deaf man about an oratorio. We feel that Judas at this time had become morally colour-blind. Not until his eyes have been opened by the lurid light of a great crime will Judas be able to utter an opinion worth listening to; then he will say a word that we all confess is of infinite value. Jesus Christ has said, "Ye are My witnesses." It is quite true. They all were His witnesses, beginning with Judas. Judas was the first; Judas was one of the greatest. No Apostle ever said a grander thing, a more forceful thing, or gave a nobler testimony, than did the Apostle Judas when, after the crucifixion of Christ, he stood upon the very verge of eternity, at a time when, one feels sure, his eyes were opened, and his words sincere; he said, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood." We all admit the Apostle Judas worth listening to on that occasion, but on an occasion like this, no. We feel that it is the evidence of a man colour-blind. And yet one cannot help admitting that even on this occasion what Judas said had a show of good reason in it. "To what purpose is this waste?" Three hundred pennyworth of ointment all wasted in an act of mere sentiment, when it might have fed so many poor people! There was point in what he said; there was reason in it; there was force in it: so much so that Mary became utterly dumb—she had not a word to say for herself, so much so that the disciples themselves became quiescent. They sided with Judas. The jury were evidently on the side of the counsel for the prosecution, and dead against the prisoner. So much point,

indeed, is there in what he said that, apart from the odium of his personality, his argument appeals to us all. What was the use of it as far as that goes? Was not it waste? Was it right to pour out ointment worth three hundred pence? What good did it do Jesus Christ? What good did it do anybody? And what an amount of good it might have done, as Judas said! Magnificent, you may say. Ah yes, that is not the question. Magnificent, but was it wise? nay, nay, was it right? Jesus is the Judge, and Jesus decides.

Now we must remember that Jesus was no friend of waste. "Gather up the fragments," is the standing order of His kingdom. Let nothing be wasted. He is the Friend of the poor; He places no value on empty sentiment. When the young ruler comes to Him questioningly, kneels at His feet with the "Good Master," He takes the compliment and flings it back to him: "Why callest thou Me good?" He says that in the last day there will be certain people who will come to Him: "Lord! Lord!" It is no good. Now this is the Christ that is to sit in judgment on poor Mary's act, and what chance has she? She may be forgiven, but it seems as if she must be condemned. And yet the judgment of the Lord is against Judas, and of Mary Christ says the act was not waste; it did serve a purpose. She was right; they were wrong. The poor have not been defrauded; humanity has been enriched. The atmosphere of the world has been sweetened by the fragrance of this action. Not only does she leave this court without a stain upon her character: before

she leaves the Judge passes an eulogy upon her. Jesus Christ decides there and then that her act shall be incorporated with His own Gospel. Wherever the Gospel is preached He will give to what she has done a publicity as wide, a fame as lasting, as the fame of Calvary and the history of the Son of God Himself.

It startled Judas; it stung Judas. Till that moment he had hung a little in the balance. The devil was strong in him, but he had not quite made up his mind. But when Christ gave this verdict, then, like an arrow from a tense bow, he went and asked the chief priests what they would give for Christ.

Well now, this passage raises the whole question of public worship. Public worship involves an expenditure of money, time, talent, trouble, and here we have an act of worship, the purest act perhaps in the whole Gospels. We look here, not to the Temple, but here, for public worship, for personal worship, with all the issues that it raises. And I venture to state that this passage, raising this question of expense as it does and of possible waste, has special point and freshness for us as a Church and congregation in the circumstances in which we now are. We have a building that has cost a large amount of money; we have lately spent a large amount of money upon the new organ that stands before you, and to which you have been listening. And there comes to us Judas's plea. Why this waste? Why all the money, the time, the talent, the trouble? Could not it be better employed? Could not more results be got some other way than by this way of public

worship? Again, we see very clearly that such an act as Mary's was might easily have degenerated into an act of wilful waste. Mahomet said that the bridge which divides heaven and hell is not, as some people think, very broad, but just as narrow as a razor's edge. So narrow is the dividing line in this case between waste and sacrifice. And I would ask you who have heard with me the verdict of our Lord—and He has not explained His verdict; we have just listened to it—I would ask you to try with me to find what there was in Mary's act which saved it from being an act of waste and converted it into an act of sacrifice, so that nobody lost anything by it, an act of clear gain to all round: gain to herself, gain to the poor, pleasure to Christ and pleasure to God in Christ, and a boon to the wide world, which Jesus Christ said should hear of her action. What was there in it, in order that you and I may be able by following it to some extent to save our acts of worship from being acts of wilful waste?

Now the first thing that like a clear flame plays all through this act of Mary's is her intense, glowing, and reverent love for Jesus Christ. It was an act that dominated love, and there was so much love in it that it was redeemed and rescued. Only a great act could redeem a passage like this from being what they call in the newspapers "a scene." Had there not been the presence of a passion of love that was positively awful in its intensity, we should have had here not a grand uplifting passage, but a mere scene. But the love was there—love glowing, intense, and reverent. Not gratitude only, not mere thankfulness to Christ

because Lazarus, her brother, was alive—that was there, but there was more there. Through that act, as through a great window, Mary with open eyes now gazed, and saw something in Christ that was greater than His act. He had said to her, "I am the Resurrection"—that is an act; but He had gone on: "I am the Resurrection and"—and what?—"and the Life itself." "The Life that is to be through all eternity—I am that!" Mary looked in through the window of the resurrection of her brother, and she saw in Jesus Christ the Life and in Christ the infinite goodness of God, something more than any act, something more than any miracle: she saw the Divinity, she saw the goodness, of the Lord in the Son of God. We may be sure that her mind was not clear on many points perhaps, and I think it likely, too, that Mary understood less this night than at any time in her career. She could not have answered you many questions. I think you could easily have posed her. Perhaps she never would have understood less. But she never knew so much as she knew then, and what she knew was this, the great secret which to know is to possess the philosophy of eternity: that God is good; that God is love. That is the one thing that she knew and felt, and the love of God constrained her.

It is said that a wood was once on fire—a wood standing on a hill. People tried to put it out, but failed. The fire blazed up, and penetrated beneath the soil. By-and-by the beholders saw with amazement a white stream of molten silver rushing from within. There was a mine there. That is what we

have here. The fire of the love of God played around this woman's grand nature. She was not one to catch fire easily. She did not belong to the shrieking sisterhood; she was calm and self-possessed. But the fire of God played around her day by day, until at last the tongue of its mighty flame touched the very heart of the woman, and all the silver and the gold of mighty affection rushed out in this act of the text, intense, glowing, reverent love and the love saved her action, justified it. When a soul loves like Mary did, God allows that soul to do what it likes. There shall be no criticism. She may go to the Temple and offer the conventional offering if she chooses; she may go to the house of the feast and invent a ritual of her own if she likes; she is not to be interfered with. Judas is a priest in heart; he stood for the little pope that is in us all. We blame people if they do not worship according to our ways; we are angry with people if they get to the kingdom of heaven by any way except our own patent way. There is no salvation except through sacraments, say the priests; through confession, says the Church of Rome; through this, through that. Brethren, when a soul loves God intensely he may worship as he likes; flask of ointment in his hand—anything will do, anything will do, if the fire is there: that is what God wants. If it is not there, then it does not matter what you give.

And so that is the test of our worship. We come here Sunday after Sunday in large crowds; we take upon our lips words of passionate adoration; but the text is this: "Why callest thou Me good?" When

you sing the hymn with others, can you say that you sing it because you are convinced that God deserves you should sing so about Him? If not, what is the value of it? "Why callest thou Me good?" Woe be to you and me if we have not an answer ready for that! "Why callest thou Me good?" Paul could answer that. If you take Paul to task for the great words he uttered, you can find in all his Epistles doxologies and hymns of praise to his Christ. If you tax him and say, "Why, Paul?" you have got the answer: "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." Unless there is love to God, unless there is in the heart peace with the Eternal God in Jesus Christ, our most reverent and orderly services are mere scenes, useless, worthless, wanton acts, waste of time, money, talent, trouble.

Next to the love I notice the intense spirituality of this woman's worship. There was nothing in the surroundings to suggest the Divine or the spiritual. All the surroundings and accompaniments of worship were lacking. There was none of the dim religious light. It was a supper-room; the festal lamps were glaring; around were the tables, with the remainders of the evening feast. Jesus sat like a man among men; the Man was in evidence, the humanity was being emphasised, that night; it was to the Man the tribute was being paid chiefly. Men sat there and feasted with Christ because the Divinity to them for the time being was shrouded in the Man. But while they sat there looking at the Man this woman, with no help from any outward thing—this woman's keen eye saw the Divine in Him, saw the Divine, saw

clearly. Oh, she seemed to see nothing else. They felt, How near to us He is ; how like to us He is. She felt, How awfully distant from me He is—the Divine. And so while Lazarus sat at meat with Him, while Martha served, Mary worshipped. Nay, Mary, but the Temple is over yonder in Jerusalem ; the Temple is not here, but yonder ; this is Simon's house. The answer she makes is, The temple is wherever God is, and the Priest is wherever the heart that loves Him is, and the sacrifice is wherever the soul gives itself in adoration. She lost sight of all that surrounded Him, and fixed her burning gaze upon the Divinity in the Christ.

That is another test of our worship. People complain very often, when they come back from their holidays, of the curious churches and chapels they have been to in the country, of the things that they missed in the little country villages, in some poor little Congregational, Baptist, or Methodist church. Things were not there as they expected to find them, and so of course they did not go again. Man, what does it matter if you found God in the place? What does it matter what you found if you did not find Him? It is not what you find in the church, it is what you bring to it, that is of the greatest importance. Do you bring a seeking soul? Do you bring a prayerful heart? Do you bring an earnest spirit, meaning business? Do you seek the Eternal? If you do, you find Him ; and if you find Him, what does it matter whether it is in Simon's house, with the tables covered with fragments of the supper, or in the Temple at Jerusalem, with the silver trumpets sound-

ing in your ears and the white vestments of the priests flowing before your eye? What does it matter, temple or no temple, where soul and God are heart to heart? There is everything that we need. And where that is not, all the rest is sheer and utter waste. And if we do not in this place seek something more than a nice service—a man told me the other day that our service was "a decent one." Well, one is glad to receive a compliment like that from some people; one did not know that it was till that moment. But what does it all matter? What will be the value of this organ, or this church for that matter, to you and to me in a hundred years from this night, if that is all we find here? Supposing we had a preacher here that could preach like ten thousand angels, with the eloquence of a million seraphs if you like, and if through it all you and I did not see God, come into touch with eternal truth, what would it all be but the clang of a cymbal, and a cracked one at that, leaving us as poor at the end as at the beginning?

I note once more the tremendous courage of this woman's action. I venture to say that if Mary lived in the nineteenth century she would not be found upon the platform. She was not a "woman's rights" woman. Martha would be better at that. Mary was a retiring woman, of a retiring nature. All her womanly instincts, all the tendencies of her nature, were against any show, any scene. And especially at this time prudence itself dictated that she should be silent. A price was on the head of Christ. It was a dangerous thing to be known as a friend of Jesus.

And if, as she believed, He were the Son of God, why need any act? Would He not know of the love that would be in her heart? Be quiet, then; sit, at any rate, in silent adoration. No! The time for secret discipleship with this woman is past. In Jerusalem they are making a demonstration of their hatred, and in Bethany Mary will start a counter-demonstration. Jerusalem shall be answered. In Jerusalem they are preparing their worst for Him, the cross and the thorn-crown; Mary will lead the way in Bethany to prepare the best for Him, the precious ointment upon His head. And so, with tremendous courage, the courage after all that characterises women more than men—for the bravest are among them—she, single-handed and alone, dares to anoint with ointment that head upon which the priests had put their price. It was an act of holy daring. Brethren, unless our corporate worship leads to single acts of consecration and personal courage, I venture to say, so far as we are concerned, corporate worship does not pay, does not answer. There is a corporate courage that drags a coward to an ignoble death; there is many a man in the crowd who will rush forward who, if he stood alone, would rush the other way. And what is the value of our worship if it is only in the crowd we can lift our voices to praise God, if we must have around us a thousand people before we can stand up and lift our voices to God? Unless there is that in us which has holy courage at the root of it, then, as Judas said, why this waste?

Just once more. Judas in his speech for the prosecution only noticed the ointment that she had

shed. None are so blind as those who will not see. That was not all. The ointment did as a beginning to express the first feelings of which she was conscious : those of gratitude, love, and adoration. But as she went on with her great act Mary discovered there was something in her soul craving expression that the precious ointment could not express. She had not led a sinful life like that other woman had led who in another place on another occasion had anointed the feet of Christ. Perhaps Mary had never known in any real sense that she was a sinner. Martha no doubt could have enlightened her on the point, but Martha was more irritating than convincing. And it seems as if Jesus Himself had never accused Mary, but rather had defended her when she was accused, and perhaps till this moment it had never crossed her pure mind that she too was a sinner. But, now that she stood before Jesus as the Son of God, she saw not only Him, but herself glassed on the purer mirror of perfect love ; and what she saw there was what Isaiah saw in the Temple. She saw that she too was sinful, a sinful woman. The alabaster cruse of ointment now failed to express what she felt. She in heart-broken penitence, pierced with the conviction that what she needed was not simply the power to raise the dead brother, but a Saviour to redeem her from sin, flung herself, as the other woman had flung herself, at the feet of Christ, and washed them, not with ointment, but with tears ; and she wiped them with the hair of her head. Oh, Judas, if waste it was, it was not waste of ointment only, but waste of hot tears, waste of body, of soul ! To Jesus it was not

waste. It was new birth ; it was another resurrection, a resurrection not from the grave, but from trespasses and sins, the casting off by the soul of its grave-clothes. No, it was not waste, for it was the act of a penitent soul.

One rejoices in having the apparatus, if I may so call it, of worship. There are times when, though I am not a musical man, I am glad that we have music. I am glad that there are organs that can peal forth thoughts that one cannot express, music that the soul seems at times to have heard before, moods of memory as if something were awakened in one that had slept from before birth. But if all this apparatus of worship does not lead up by-and-by to a mood in you and me where it fails of expression, if there does not come over us that no singing, no choir, no organ, no minister, no book, can express, a mood that can only be expressed, as Mary expressed herself, by just flinging ourselves at the very feet of Christ in God, in silent surrender and tearful penitence, then the whole purpose of worship, so far as we are concerned, has failed to pay its way. If this flask of ointment had been enough, if it had not led up to, and been followed by, tears, then it would have been waste ; but it was redeemed from waste because of the act by which it was followed.

The last word. You will say, What about the poor meanwhile ? what about the poor ? Judas talks very reasonably about them, as you have seen : " Why was not this sold and given to the poor ? " But if you analyse what he says it is very miserable. A man that talks like that is evidently not in the habit of

doing very much for the poor. He feels that the poor are many, and money is scarce. Property, he feels, must be realised. There must be a sale, or something, before the poor can be helped. Judas is very ready to sell, specially other people's property. Why, this could have been sold and given to the poor! Jesus Christ says, "The poor ye have with you always"—always. Care for the poor is not an act, Judas, to come in now and then. Those who care for the poor are people that feel. They are to be cared for constantly. Care for the poor, Judas, is a commonplace thing with people that act like Mary. What about the poor? They are safe in the love of those who love Christ as this woman did. I read the other day that a crowd of people in New York hissed the mention of the Christian Church. It is a common thing to hiss the Church in some places now, but I venture to say that the world has not yet earned the right to hiss the Church of Christ. Before you hiss anybody, you ought to have a right to do it, or an institution either. I venture to say that if the hiss is to be directed at any one, it is at the world, not at the Church. It is the world that wastes—wastes money; wastes talent; wastes life. "The poor ye have with you always." Where are they to be found? They are to be found where they were found in the days of Christ: at the gate of the temple. The poor are safe in the hands of people whose hearts have been touched as this woman's heart was touched by Christ.

These then are the points, it seems to me, in this passage that redeemed Mary's act from being an act of waste; and these, it seems to me also, are the only

things that will redeem your acts and mine of worship from also being acts of waste.

Now it is noticeable that these acts of intense devotion to the Saviour were done by women, and my point in closing is this: these things were done by women because they listened to their hearts. And perhaps there are more women in the Christian Church to-night because women naturally listen more to their hearts than men do. But is that a point against them? Would it not be better if you men too, instead of playing at being big boys, listened more to your hearts? You know there is a disease that comes over a boy at one time in his life—big-boyishness—when he becomes ashamed of things of which there is no reason to be ashamed. There comes a time when a boy is ashamed of showing affection or of showing that he feels at all. But you know there is a great deal more of that among men. Big-boyishness passes away, and by-and-by it becomes big-mannishness. Big-mannishness stands in the way of many a man coming into the Christian Church to-night. He likes his wife to come, he likes his daughters to come, he likes his boys to come, but he will not come. Why? Too big a man! And yet all the time the heart is there. Dear men, listen more to what there is of the child in you in this matter. Listen more to what there is of your own mother in you in this matter. Listen more to your own hearts, indeed. The heart will not deceive you in this when it points to Christ as the needle to the pole. There is no wisdom like the wisdom that comes to a man when, throwing all his false wisdom away, he

says with the prodigal, "I will arise and go to my Father." Is there no one who says that to-night? I am sure there must be many a man and woman in this place of worship to-night of whom worship has not yet answered. They have come to church or chapel, they have given their contributions of money, they have spent years, it may be, in places of worship, and yet it has not answered at all. Nor will it answer, for unless it comes to something like this, what do you think will be the value of it this night ten years? There are those here who before this night ten years will have passed the veil; and unless there has been the personal act of penitence and surrender to Christ, what will it all avail? Before twenty years how many of us will be gone, before thirty how many more? Before fifty probably every man and woman in this building will have passed beyond the mystic veil. Let us think of these things, lest it come to pass that at the very throne of God, the throne of judgment, when we come up for judgment, our accuser shall be—who? Judas himself, and he, the Apostle, shall be there and ask, "Why this waste, these three hundred pence, these hours and years that came to nothing?" O God, grant when he asks that question we may not be afraid to answer him, in the knowledge that it did come to something, the only thing to which it ought to come: personal consecration of ourselves to our Lord.

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.

By the Rev. Alexander Maclaren, D.D.*

"The eunuch saw him no more. And he went on his way rejoicing."—Acts viii. 39.

"And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost."—Acts xiii. 52.

I HAVE put these two texts together this evening because the circumstances of the persons concerned in them are so remarkably alike. Both the eunuch and these people in Pisidian Antioch were very recent converts; they were alike in their extremely scanty knowledge of Christian truth; they were alike in that they were deprived of their only external helpers just at the moment when it would have seemed probable that they would be most needful; and they were alike in this, that they did not a bit seem to miss them, and that the eunuch, though he might have been forgiven if he had, cast no lingering looks after the vanishing Philip, nor did the brethren in Antioch beseech Paul and Barnabas to stop with them. And the explanation which is given of how that came about in reference to the latter of the two sets of people may apply to them both. The

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eunuch and they were filled with joy, and in both cases it was because they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now I need not remind you, I suppose, that the Evangelist Luke, both in his Gospel and in the Acts, is fond of this expression, "full of" so-and-so, both in regard to the good and the bad elements of character. He talks, for instance, about men being "filled with all subtlety and mischief," he talks about others being full of faith and of good works, and of various graces; and he is also fond of coupling different excellences of the Christian character with that other solemn expression "full of the Holy Ghost." For instance, the men that were fit to be deacons must be "full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom," and of one of them it is said that he was "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," the Divine Indweller being in each case supposed and asserted to be the cause of the human excellence. Similarly here "full of the Holy Ghost and of joy" is the analysis and the laying bare of the deepest secret of, and the inmost reason for, all true substantial gladness.

Now I do not need, I suppose, to remind you that this great expression, "filled with the Spirit of God," does not express any temporary advantage or pre-eminence of the primitive Church. It refers to no transient, supernatural endowments, but to that abiding possession which is the condition of all Christian excellence. Nor need I remind you, I presume, that it is not expressly a prerogative that belongs to any Christian aristocracy, but that it is the prerogative of every Christian man, woman, and child, and that if any

such have not the possession of that Divine source of life sufficiently deep and all-pervading to be designated by that great word "fulness" it is the fault of the man, and not of the Gospel or the Lord of the Gospel.

Now I think that if we look at these two incidents with which our texts are concerned bearing in mind the circumstances of the persons to whom they respectively relate, we may get two or three very great and blessed views of the prerogatives and privileges which belong to all Christian people, and are theirs on the condition, which they may all attain to if they will, of being "filled with the Holy Spirit."

Here then is a revelation of a Teacher for all our ignorance, a Companion in all our loneliness, a source of joy in all our sorrow, a Teacher in all our ignorance. Think of that Ethiopian statesman. An hour before he had said, "How can I understand it except some man guide me?" and he had got his guidance, and the guidance was twitched away from him almost as soon as it had been granted. Would he have repeated his question, do you think, after Philip went away, and have said then that he could not understand unless he had a human guide? I do not think he would. He had the roll of the prophet Isaiah; he had the slight, superficial, rudimentary knowledge which he had got from his friend by his side there during an hour's ride in the chariot. He had nothing else. Not a line of the New Testament, mind, was written, and there was no means of giving him any external help at all. And yet he went away cheerily into the darkness, quite sure that he carried with him a light in his

heart. Why, the man's faith must have been like some of those orchids that we see in rich men's greenhouses, that manage to put out a brighter and a more prominent blossom than flowers planted in rich soil, though they are fastened upon nothing but a bit of stick, and they get all their nourishment from the air. The Spirit—the wind—bloweth where it listeth, but he that has his air-rootlets, if I may venture to dwell upon the metaphor, out into the circumambient atmosphere of that Divine Spirit, will never want nourishment. He will be taught of God; and though he has no more equipment of Christian knowledge than that black eunuch on his road to Ethiopia or those poor people in Antioch just picked out of the darkness and filth of heathenism, he will have enough to make him wise unto salvation.

And has not the same thing occurred over and over again in the history of God's Church? How often have we heard of some man who has somehow or other come into contact for a moment or two with the message of salvation from some missionary or tract or other, and has managed to carry away just this one thought: "The Son of God came down from heaven because He loved me, and He died for my salvation and to redeem me from all iniquity"; and he has gone away with nothing but that; and cherishing the little seed, it has grown up into a Christlike character. Many of you know the story of our London Missionary Society brethren's experience in Madagascar: how there the Christian Church that was planted was all but annihilated by persecution, and how all the European teachers were withdrawn for

a generation or more. And when they went back what did they find? That away out in the pastures of the wilderness there were growing fair plants that God's own Spirit, and that alone, had fostered and cherished. Ay, brethren, and so it will be in the measure in which you and I, as Christian people, attach to that Divine inspiration and guidance, and if we really believed, as we profess to believe, that we have an unction from the Holy One and know all things potentially, and shall know them actually, according to our need, if we wait upon Him, our experience would verify the apparently impossible fact, and we should find out that this apparent mysticism is really the very heart of the Gospel.

That Divine Spirit will teach you if you will trust it; that Divine Spirit will teach you on the conditions plainly laid down. There must be the desire to learn. I wonder how many professing and real Christians there are in this Tabernacle this evening who have very little notion that there is anything more to learn in the Gospel than the initial truth in its simplest form, by which their souls were saved when they accepted it, that Jesus Christ died on the cross for the world's salvation. In one sense there is no more to learn, but it will take an eternity to learn all that lies in that sentence. The astronomer sees no more stars than you and I when he looks up into the heavens, but he has laboured for a lifetime in order to gain some knowledge of their magnitudes and distances and the great laws that regulate their motion. Brethren, the word of our salvation, which the simplest and the humblest of men can so comprehend as that

it shall be the word of his salvation, will open up into depths of distance and unfold orbs of brilliance that we have no conception of unless we have the trained eye and the eager desire to learn more and more of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which are laid up in Jesus Christ.

And remember, too, that there is another condition of this Divine teaching, namely, that we shall use the instruments which He uses. In the main the teaching of God's Spirit is the application of God's written word, and if you would read your Bibles more, and more intelligently, and your evening newspapers and magazines less, and if you would seek to master the word of God and to make it the man of your counsel, depend on it you would not lack the teaching of God's Spirit.

And there must be another condition, and that is prayerful and patient waiting. Brethren, farmers tell us that they may overdo the manuring of their fields and make the land, as they call it, sick, by putting too much upon it. There are a great many Christian souls that have had so many sermons, and books, and treatises, and bits of men's teaching shovelled on to their souls, that they have lost their productivity; and there is not a bit of room for God's Spirit's teaching to find its way to their hearts. In this day of babel-voices—though of course I admit that the teaching of God's word from a brother's lips may be, and often is, the Spirit's instrument—I do believe that there are few things that Christian people need more than to be relegated from men to God and beaten back from their dependence on one another to their dependence

on the Spirit of God. And so I beseech you, dear Christian friends, remember our two stories on which I am commenting this evening, and try to realise that you are the scholars of Christ, and the instrument of His teaching is His Divine Spirit, and that if you trust that it will guide you into all truth.

Well, now, secondly, our two groups of people, although there is only one man in one of them, suggest to us a companion in all our solitude. There is something very stimulating to the imagination in thinking of that Ethiopian chamberlain left alone there on the Gaza road and having to go away down into far-off Abyssinia, the only Christian in the whole kingdom, with not a soul to sympathise with him. One wonders how long he continued to be the only Christian, and hopes that it was not very long. But, at all events, his solitude and the yet more painful solitude of the little company of sheep in the midst of wolves, the Christians at Antioch, surrounded by the pressure of a hostile crowd for all their company—one feels that these two incidents may suggest to us how blessed and how real that companionship of the Divine Spirit in our solitude may be.

There are three kinds of loneliness that I would say a word about. We are all lonely souls. That awful fence and barrier of individual personality that separates each of us from every other human being can be passed over by none. Physicists tell us that if you take the most compact and dense substance, there are no two atoms of it that really touch each other, and if you could put power enough on you could squeeze anything into smaller bulk than it at

present stands, because you could squeeze the filmy air out of it. There are no two human souls that touch each other; there is a film between them all. Love comes to the edge of the fence, and sends its sweet influences over it; but we dwell alone within ourselves after all, and however close and blessed may be the grasp of hands and the intertwining of lives and hearts, yet we live as much alone as we die alone. Ay, but there is One who can pass the limits, and in no metaphor nor in any mystical exaggeration of the fact, but in simple reality, can so enter into your heart and mine that he who is joined to the Lord may be one spirit, two in order that and in so far that the sweet consciousness of giving and receiving may still remain, but one in so far that the Spirit of the Lord shall be the Spirit of my spirit, and I shall be able to say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." And will that man be lonely if he has deep in his heart the consciousness of a Divine Indweller, and will he need to fling himself into the distractions of human companions in order to escape the aching sense of solitude in his uncompanioned heart? Surely not. We shall dwell together with the Lord, and so shall never be alone. And Christ knew what it was to sound the depths of human solitude in order that He might take away the pang of our loneliness—"They all forsook Him and fled"—and therefore He can say, "I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

But there is another kind of solitude, brethren, and I have no doubt that there are many hearts that know its pain and darkness in this congregation

to-night. God lays upon some of us the burden of lonely life, but a lonely life may be a very blessed life; and when He does it is in order that He may make room for Himself to come and sit in the empty chair and fill a place in the vacant and aching heart. There is a wonderful word in one of the prophets which is universally and blessedly true: "I will lead her into the wilderness, and there I will speak to her heart." And they, I think, know comparatively little of the intimacy, and the depth, and the sweetness of Divine companionship who have not passed through the bitter experience of human loneliness. Christ had to take the blind man apart from the crowd before He could give him his sight; Moses had to be called into the horrible, dreary desert, with its grim peaks and splintered crags of granite, before he could see the great sight; and Elijah had to tread the same lonely district ere to him there came the still small voice. Friend, if you are condemned to a lonely life, nestle close to God; and the solitude will be full of sweetness and of blessings.

But there is another kind of solitude besides the necessary one attaching to our personality and the providential one which God's mercy sometimes flings around us. There is the voluntary one without which there is no depth of Christian life and no adequate possession of the Divine Spirit. Now I know that domestic arrangements and imperative duties make it all but impossible for many people to secure actual quiet and privacy for devout meditation. Very well, God can come to a man in a crowd if God stuck him there. But for all that, and making all allowances for

the circumstances in which we are placed, I venture to reiterate that no Christian person can do without that which his Master found He could not do without, and that if it were needful for Him, the more He was found in the Temple teaching and disputing, the more constantly to be all night on the Mount of Olives, you and I cannot avoid the same necessity. Solitude is "the mother-country of the strong," and all noble things grow there. Might I venture to say that, howsoever good conferences for deepening spiritual life may be, solitary communion with Jesus Christ is better, and that perhaps if we had fewer congresses, and meetings, and unions of different kinds, and Christian people listened more to that invitation, "Come, My people, into thy chamber, and shut thy doors about thee," we should find a deeper possession than we ordinarily realise of the teaching Spirit whose voice is not heard in the crowds, and the condition of whose coming is still very, very largely what it was to the prophet of old: "I was left alone, and I saw this great vision"?

Now, lastly, we may draw from our two stories the other thought, which the words of each of them must naturally suggest, of the source of joy in all sorrow. I need not remind you how familiar in the New Testament the collocation of the possession of the Holy Spirit and the possession of gladness is. We read in the words that we have already been reading together this evening of the fruits of the Spirit being "love, joy, peace." We read in another of Paul's letters, in a place still more relevant to our present purpose, how the Thessalonians "received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Ghost." And this is the

teaching of the New Testament throughout: that wherever there is a heart, a spirit, that is filled in any tolerable and adequate measure, though it be not leaping over to the very brim, with that Divine Spirit, there the degree of gladness corresponds with the degree of inspiration. For all that is needed to make a man glad is in the Bible. If it is true that a Divine influence can come to my heart and fill my faculties, and rectify all their perverted operations, and harmonise them all in sweet co-operation of submissive service, and can breathe into my conscience the assurance that I am God's son, and can deliver me from distractions and warring tendencies, and bind me all into one to fear His name, then I know not what more a soul can need for its joy. And, brethren, this is possible for every one of us; and the co-existence of this deep, essential, unalterable gladness with external occasions and causes of sorrow is perfectly possible. Remember our two stories: how these ignorant men, having new problems to face and ringed about with many enemies, had not a tremor, nor a fear, nor a pang, nor a qualm, but were filled with gladness. Ah, brother, when circumstances seem to make it impossible for us not to be sad, God's Spirit may make it impossible for us not to rejoice. "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." It is no paradox nor any peculiar experience of the Apostles, but rather it is the prerogative of each of us if we will. It seems to me that every human life has in it the two things together. The difference between the lives is, which is uppermost. We can take our choice between a superficial mirth and a central sadness or a surface

sorrow and a kernel of joy. And which do you think is the best? The two things will go together. Which of them is to be skin-deep—the joy that will end in heaviness and is as the crackling of thorns under the pot even whilst it lasts, or the sorrow that is but for a moment and exceeding light? You may make your choice. Take the deep things that God's Spirit is ready to give you, and let your heart, in touch with Him, possess the blessedness that the world can neither give nor take away.

There are two currents in the ocean: an inrush of cold from the poles and an upper rush of warm and genial waves from the equator. There may be two currents in our lives; the cold of sorrow may be all covered over by the blessedness and the warmth of gladness. Do you see to it, brethren, that it is so with you. Remember the conditions. They are not difficult, neither difficult to understand nor difficult to practise, except for our obstinate and perverse wills. The Spirit of God dwelling in a man's heart is the fountain and source of all blessedness.

Oh, dear friends, when we read such words as these of our text, "filled with the Holy Ghost," one cannot help thinking how unlike they are to the realities of the average professing Christian of this day. "Filled with the Spirit"—and for so many of us the reality is a little drop in the bottom of the heart that is scarcely perceptible. God's promise is, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground," and I look round our churches, and I see men and women the reality of whose Christianity I dare not doubt, whose hearts are not thus filled, but

resemble rather some of those river-beds in Eastern lands in the droughts, a great stretch of glittering pebbles; and down the middle somewhere, creeping below the stones, almost unseen, and unable to move one of them, is a little trickle of water. What has become of the "floods on the dry ground"? Ay, the promise is "to him that is thirsty"; and how many of us there are who know nothing about that Divine thirst, neither come hither to that fountain of all life and draw. Desire and trust, and you will possess. If you have that Spirit, you will be enlightened to all needs of teaching, howsoever much you may still be ignorant of; you will be companioned for all the necessities of the heart in which it is not good to be alone, howsoever lonely you may otherwise be; you will be glad with a sacred, and central, and changeless gladness, howsoever much of sorrow may be planted in your lot. If you have it not, you will be ignorant, however conceiving yourselves to be wise; you will be sad, however trying to persuade yourselves that you are joyful; and you will be lonely in life, however many may be the friends that gather round you. If we are full of faith, we shall be filled with the Spirit; and if we are filled with the Spirit, we cannot be empty of the joy of the Holy Ghost.

FIFTY SERMON OUTLINES.

THE PROPHET SAMUEL.

By the Rev. Thomas Champness.

Preached at the Wesleyan Central London Mission, St. John's Square, Clerkenwell, September 27th, 1891.

"And all Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord."—1 Sam. iii. 20.

"From Dan to Beersheba"—that is to say, from Plymouth to Aberdeen—knew that God was speaking by the mouth of a little child.

From the study of this story we learn—

I.—That bad men and bad things are doomed. Nothing can keep alive that which God has condemned.

II.—That mothers must get their children ready. What honour came to Hannah through Samuel! Say, "My child shall be devoted to God's service."

III.—That God calls children to early consecration. "A flower when offered in the bud is no vain sacrifice." This is the pathway to honour and greatness. God's dividends are more than cent. per cent. Nobody gives interest as God does. May many here be established to be prophets of the Lord.

THE SPHERE OF CHRISTIAN DUTY.

By the Very Rev. C. J. Vaughan, D.D.

Preached in the Temple Church, London, October 4th, 1891.

"Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him."—Col. iii. 17.

We have here three things:—

I.—The sphere of Christian duty. This is the whole life. We are perpetually dividing the sacred and the secular in our lives. But St. Paul says *everything* is to be done in the name of the Lord.

II.—The principle of Christian living: "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." "Name" is a very great word in Scripture. The name of Christ is Christ such as He is—person, character, work, past, present, and to come. The rule before us finds its explanation in the words, "Without Me, apart from Me, ye can do nothing."

Brethren, we can do all in our own name, as if we belonged to no one, as if we were our own authority, our own law; but a Christian is a representative of Christ. Everywhere and in all things he represents Jesus. He does all "in the name of Christ."

III.—The tone of Christian service: "Giving thanks unto God and the Father by Him." St. Paul is full of thanksgiving; it is the very atmosphere of prayer. Thanksgiving can be cultivated. There is but one security for thankfulness: that we should know Him. If we believe that, living or dying, we are the Lord's, then we shall have learnt, in whatever state we are, therewith to be content, and, more than that, therewith to be thankful.

Say, "In the name of the Lord Jesus," before you visit a friend, before you sit down to meat. Try it upon your work, your society, your home.

A CLARION CALL TO SAINTS AND SINNERS.

By the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.

"Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit," October 8th, 1891.

"Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest; because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction."—Micah ii. 10.

Like the poor birds that light on bird-lime and cannot get away, we are entangled by the things of time and sense, instead of rising, as on eagle wings, to a higher sphere.

I.—The text is a clarion note for believers in Christ. The soldier at the sound of the bugle must forsake the warmest couch and turn out and take his place in the ranks. "Arise ye and depart."

There are occasions when this call comes especially to us: when saints begin to be comfortable, or to fraternise with the world, or to dream of long life on earth.

(1) The argument by which the call is strengthened: "This is not your rest." You remember this when troubles come, and when success is not enjoyed, and when friends are taken home.

(2) The fact by which this call is enforced: "Because it is polluted."

(3) The danger that the things of this world may be our destruction.

II.—An arousing note for awakened sinners. You are called upon to depart from sin and self, for you are polluted, for destruction threatens you.

TWO-TALENTED MEN.

By the Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

Preached at Union Chapel, Manchester, October 16th, 1891.

"Much good is in the tillage of the poor."—Prov. xiii. 23.

Palestine was a land of small peasant proprietors, and the institution of the jubilee was intended to prevent the acqui-

sition of large estates by any Israelite. Spade husbandry gets most out of the ground. Much may be made of slender gifts, small resources, and limited opportunities if carefully cultivated. This text is a message to ordinary, mediocre people.

I.—It teaches the responsibility of small gifts. Responsibility is not to be measured by amount of gift, but is equally stringent, entire, and absolute whatsoever be the magnitude of the endowments from which it arises.

II.—There must be a diligent cultivation of the small gifts. A little holding generally means good husbandry. Who are they who have done the most in this world for God and for men? The largely endowed men? "Not many wise, not many mighty, are called."

III.—The harvest reaped from these slender gifts when sedulously tilled. The faithfully used faculty increases; the final reward is not to the brilliant, but to the faithful, servant.

WANTED!—VOLUNTEERS.

By the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.

"Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit," October 22nd, 1891.

"And next him was Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself unto the Lord, and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valour."—2 Chron. xvii. 16.

This lord-lieutenant could command an army and at the same time obey the commands of God. Christian men ought to value Christian servants.

I.—Amasiah made it his life-work to serve the Lord. God's service is honourable, remunerative, and safe.

II.—He was a ready volunteer. He needed no pressing, and no looking after, and no leader.

III.—He offered himself to the Lord. He made no

reserve as to what he had, nor as to what he did, nor as to when or how he should serve.

IV.—He did this in a secular calling. He did not stipulate to be a prophet. His was a difficult calling, but he rose to eminence in it, and left an honourable record.

V.—He is an example to others—to men of position, to men who are rising in the world.

Where are the volunteers? Happy are they who in their youth willingly offer themselves to God.

DEDICATION.

By the Most Rev. Edward W. Benson, D.D., Archbishop of Canterbury.

Preached at Great St. Mary's, Cambridge, November 1st, 1891.

"For their sakes I consecrate Myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth."—John xvii. 19.

All sayings of Christ, even those which belong to the highest region of His personality, have essentially their human side. This saying of His, though free of mystery, is no exception. It is the expression of a necessity which appears in every grade of mental, spiritual, and historical life. What distinguishes His saying is the intensity of the consecration. But the saying is not other than human. It touches humanity along all its range. We should choose a high aim and work out our choice in life. Dedication is what we want.

I.—I *dedicate* myself. He who is strong enough to say so, with quiet force and unforgetful purpose, will never fail in his purpose. What we might call failure will be but a critical step in his progress.

II.—I dedicate *myself*. A man must be sure that he is not dedicating self to self. Self-admiration is a fatal fault.

III.—I *dedicate myself*. We must borrow from Christ's words a larger thought: "For their sakes I dedicate Myself," sympathy with mankind.

IV.—But we are not yet at the height of His words. "For their sakes I consecrate Myself," was what He said. There was not only the human surrender: there was the Divine sanctification. And further He revealed His final hope "that they also may be consecrated in truth"—that is, *in reality*. Some effects of self-consecration in reality we follow by observation. In books and in living men we perceive what clear insight, what ability to see all round a question, flows from truest spiritual experience. The great practical survey of the facts of life and death leads to the expulsion of self-love, of self-interest. The "all saints" of to-day are those whom we know as having been consecrated by that consecration of Christ.

PRIDE.

By the Hon. and Rev. A. T. Lyttelton.

Preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, November 22nd, 1891.

"We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus our Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus's sake."—2 Cor. iv. 5.

The moral temper which Christ inculcated was a new thing in the world. Now it is the very air we breathe. Christ transformed the moral conceptions of mankind. This was only a minor part of His work. His life and death were far more than a revelation of morality. But He did teach the great principles of conduct; and He not only gave men strength to obey the moral law, but He made them see that law in a wholly fresh light. Our Lord for the first time convinced the world of the sinfulness of pride. In the true Christian consciousness pride stands first among the deadly

sins. Most of us feel the difficulty of distinguishing between pride, the sinful temper, and proper pride or self-respect, and thus the sinfulness of pride comes often to be ignored.

In the Bible it is chiefly defined by its opposite. Much is said about humility, little about pride.

I.—What is pride? Under all its varied forms it is one in essence, viz., the exaggerated sense of individuality, the dread of merging self in the common mass of mankind. Christianity gives indeed to the individual his highest worth; each human soul is that for which the whole scheme of salvation has been planned and ordered; Christ in His redeeming work has singled out and made for ever precious each individual personality among men: but individuality is thus exalted, not that it might be isolated, but that it might realise itself by two great acts of union: union with others and union with God. And pride is sin because it breaks into and destroys both these unions. At no moment of Christ's life on earth was the consciousness of His sonship absent from Him, and yet its realisation only enabled Him the more thoroughly and absolutely to merge Himself in us, and because He is God to "taste death for every man." Humility is the great uniting quality. Pride is essentially the temper of disunion, the solvent of Christian society.

St. Paul is emphatic in repudiating any claim for self. "Slaves for you and for Christ." The lowest work will be gladly accepted by the Christian; he is nothing but a wheel in the vast machinery, and he can have no thought for his own individuality.

The influence of pride on our relations with God is felt in a twofold manner. It is, on the one hand, the motive power of disobedience. Again, pride is at the root of much of the rejection of the truth of the Gospel and the doctrinal system of His Church.

THE SESSION OF CHRIST.

By the Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

Preached at Union Chapel, Manchester, November 29th, 1891.

"We have such a High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary."—Heb. viii. 1, 2.

I.—The seated Christ: "who has taken His seat on the right hand of the throne." We have a High Priest who in His manhood, in which He is Priest to us, has taken His seat in heaven.

What is the deepest meaning of that majestic session at "the right hand"? It means that deep repose which is the sign of an accomplished purpose and an achieved task. Rest, royalty, and power now belong to the Man sitting at the right hand of the throne of God.

II.—The Servant Christ. "A Minister of the sanctuary." The past, glorious as it is, needs to be supplemented by the present, no less wonderful and glorious work, in which Jesus within the veil brings down upon men the blessings that flow from His sacrifice. The glorified Christ is a ministering Christ.

III.—The practical lessons of such thoughts as these. An ascended Christ forces us to believe in an atoning Christ. These thoughts have for the past a seal, for the present a strength, and for the future a prophecy.

WHAT CHRIST CAME FOR.

By the Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D.

Preached in City Temple, Holborn, December 3rd, 1891.

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."—1 Tim. i. 15.

When a man has only one purpose it ought to be ascertainable. Unity of purpose is the secret of strength and the key of success. Ask Jesus Christ when and where you may where He came from, and He never changes the

substance of His answer; ask Him what He goes away for, and He says, "For your sake."

The text is associated with a curious commentary: "of whom I am chief."

I.—The central saying: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." No other man ever did that. We know not the author of this saying. There are great truths that need no signing.

II.—The relation of the Apostle to this "saying." It is a twofold fellowship.

(1) He accepts it as a fact. There is but a step between any text in the Bible and the cross on which the Saviour died. Paul says, "This fact covers my whole life; I see in it morning and summer growth and harvest; I accept it as true." It is unreservedly true. There are some lamps that want all heaven to shine in; so with certain "sayings." No one country could hold them. It is worthy of acceptation. It is pregnantly true. It includes and involves other truths. It is beneficently true—"to save" the soul in every thought, element, motive, capability, and issue.

(2) Paul illustrates it as an experience: "of whom I am chief." Increase of sensitiveness is increase of self-condemnation. The Gospel addresses itself to our supreme experiences; the worst man, the proud rebellious heart that can hardly be melted by the tears of God—the Gospel deals with such. Always testify on behalf of your healer. Examples are the best arguments.

GOOD TIDINGS FOR THE POOR.

By the Right Rev. Brooke Foss Westcott, D.D., Bishop of Durham.

Preached at St. Andrew's Church, Sunderland, December 13th, 1891.

"The poor have good tidings preached to them."—Matt. xi. 5.

The Lord replied to John the Baptist's question by

recounting His works and "that the poor had good tidings preached to them."

The sign by which the Divine authority of the Master was to be recognised is the sign by which His Church must vindicate its claims. Has the Church a Gospel for the poor?

I.—What is meant by the poor? We must not confine this poverty to that of the body. There is poverty of heart and soul more desolating than that. Is it not the fact that we ourselves create in a large degree the world in which we live? We give its real value to the abundance or to the penury by which we are surrounded. The soul may be rich in moral wealth, but the Gospel has good tidings for the poor in body and in soul, the poor in means and in faculties.

II.—The Gospel of Christ gives back to every child of earth through the Atonement his spiritual sovereignty over the world.

III.—The Gospel of Christ declares the unity of mankind.

IV.—The Gospel of Christ shows us that the Divine is the foundation of the human, and that the human is the fulfilment of the Divine. It turns our thoughts from what we can do to what God has done and is doing.

"NOT AS YET."

By the Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D.

Preached in City Temple, Holborn, December 17th, 1891.

"Ye are not as yet come to the rest."—Deut. xii. 2.

"Not as yet" is a blossom-like word. A blossom is an unfulfilled prophecy. "Not as yet." Why, then, it may be some day! That is the pith of the text. "Not as yet," but sufficiently near to be getting ready. We need those little bird-words; we love to hear the song that is wrung out of their feathery throats.

I.—Rest is promised, not as the reward of selfishness, but as the crown of service. No man can rest who has not toiled. So work all the six days that Sunday shall be a real Sabbath. Blessed are they who labour much, for they shall rest much. The kind of work we are to do embraces the welfare of others. If the Christlike spirit be not in you, you cannot work for man.

II.—We need frequent Sabbaths. At every seventh step of the journey we must sit down and take refreshment. Sometimes we have a lift by the way. You are weary and a little one, and the Shepherd carrieth the lambs in His bosom. What rest can they have who have never known the strife? Anxiety is a wolf they have only heard of as belonging to some kind of spiritual zoological garden; they go to look at it, but happily they think it is on the other side of the bars.

III.—The principle that Christ went upon was the principle of "not as yet." He looked for the joy that lay beyond. Men draw themselves through earth by laying hold of heaven. Not quite there, but heaven is so near that thou mayest even at thy next awaking see it.

PROMPTITUDE.

By the Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D.

Preached in City Temple, Holborn, December 24th, 1891.

"And straightway he that had received the five talents went and traded with them."—Matt. xxv. 16.

Who took his journey straightway? It was the receiving servant. That is your handbook of life: "straightway." Delay means temptation, growing indifference, second thoughts. How many men spend their lives in "looking round" and seeing nothing! The wise man has only one time: Now. He is the speculator who says he will do

something to-morrow. To-morrow is as invisible as God; to-morrow is a property in which we have no rights.

I.—Promptitude kills doubt. It is the waiting Christian who falls into doubts and mazes. The busy man is the sage man. If we had more work we should have less doubt, more faith, more service, more outgoing of soul, more incoming of the Spirit of God.

II.—Promptitude develops faculty. No man knows how much of a man he is until he has gone out to tackle the world earnestly. Faithfulness always comes back charged with blessing.

III.—The application of this is, "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." Have you ever so little faith? Straightway go out and practise it.

ABRAHAM'S TRIAL: A LESSON FOR BELIEVERS.

By the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.

"Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit," December 24th, 1891.

"And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Behold, here I am."—Gen. xxii. 1.

Everything that will abide the fire shall go through the fire, that it may be both proved and improved. "God did prove Abraham." He was the Columbus who by faith went out and discovered a better country, that is, a heavenly; and his track has been followed by many other voyagers. Not without storms did he cross the sea, and we too who venture after him on the voyage of faith must expect contrary winds.

I.—The Lord's way with believers. (1) God *does* deal with His people. (2) God tests their fear of God and their faith and their love. (3) He tests them again and again.

(4) He blesses them greatly thereby. Abraham thus avoided the evil of thinking too much of Isaac, and he had a clearer view of Christ than before. "Abraham rejoiced to see My day."

II.—The believer's way with God. It takes two to make communion and fellowship. (1) Abraham shows himself ready to be taught: "Here am I"; (2) ready to obey, ready to surrender, ready to be inspected. The believer who is prepared to respond to the Lord in such a way has much cause to praise, for he has been made ready by the grace of God, and he will be kept ready to the end. You shall go merrily through life and joyfully to death, and you shall rise triumphantly to the glad morning, answering, "Here am I, for Thou didst call me," to God's voice.

THE LOWLY TEACHER.

By the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll, M.A., LL.D.

January 21st, 1892.

"For I am meek and lowly in heart."—Matt. xi. 29.

When Jesus sought disciples He professed Himself meek and lowly in heart. What was the attraction of this claim?

I.—It was a promise to be kind and patient with slow learners. In His school the lessons are often hard; the Teacher never is. We cannot learn from the brilliant. They dazzle us; they do not instruct us. We cannot learn from the austere; terror paralyses our slow faculty, and we lose heart to go on. But we may learn from One who, however far above us, is lowly of heart, who, however slow He finds us, never loses patience, but remains meek. If we consider how hard it is for us to go back to the beginnings with a mind untaught, to keep slow step with it, to be undiscouraged by its misunderstandings, its slippings back, its impatience, its despondency, we shall understand better the meekness and lowliness of Christ.

II.—It was the claim of a Teacher who was also a Learner. No human teacher is great if he is not learning. He may have outstripped his peers, but if ever he relaxes diligence they soon leave him behind. It is not merely that he loses sympathy with his disciples. What he has to teach them grows musty, unvital, colourless, for lack of the new light that ought to be passing over it. The teacher who prepares nothing new for his pupils, who boasts that he never changes an opinion, but is to-day where he was thirty years ago, writes the character and the doom of his life. Over the teaching of Jesus our Lord, to whom all things were delivered of the Father, no cloud of error can rest. But in the days of His flesh He was a Learner. Though He were a Son, He learned obedience by the things that He suffered, and all His schooling is in His memory still.

III.—It was proof that He loved the slow, dull scholars. "Love never boasteth of herself." Is it so? Then how did He say, "I am meek and lowly of heart"? Should He not have left another to praise Him? Nay; He never was so meek and lowly as when He professed Himself such. Love opens her mouth and speaks the truth when she is claiming the place where she can render fittest service. All other times her lips are locked, but when a work of service and salvation presses, and there is none else who can do it so well, Love speaks and says so. And Love is never so purely and perfectly Love as when she makes her reluctant, humble, tender boast. It was more for Jesus to say, "I am meek and lowly of heart," than it was for Him to teach those who took His yoke because He said it.

> "And what delights can equal those
> That stir the spirit's inner deeps
> When one who loves, but knows not, reaps
> A truth from one that loves and knows?"

THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST.

By the Very Rev. C. J. Vaughan, D.D.

Preached at the Temple Church, London, January 24th, 1892.

"Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."—Isa. liii. 4.

St. Matthew clothes the words in another form: "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses," and St. John the Baptist adds yet another feature to the portraiture: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." So that we have a fourfold enumeration of the ills to which flesh is heir, and we have a fourfold figure applied to the relief given: lifting, bearing, carrying, and taking away. When we look into the four things thus lifted and borne for us, are they not indeed the four things which make up the burden of earth, the distress and discomfort of this mortal? Human sympathy is precious, is powerful, but what is not the Divine sympathy? "He hath borne our griefs."

In every sorrow and sickness the voice of God Himself speaks, saying, "Seek ye My face." And there is another mandate at such seasons. It is that of God's prophet to a king "sick unto death": "Set thy house in order." If there is any neglected duty, any folly indulged in, any cherished grudge, let there be no time lost about the repairing and rectifying.

"He hath carried our sorrows." A great sorrow has fallen upon us suddenly like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky. One fortnight ago that young prince was as little anticipating death as the youngest young man here present anticipates death to-day. Now the eyes are closed, and all England has been admitted into the death-chamber where father and mother and sisters and brother and yet one

beside have wept bitter tears, but finding solace in the people's sympathy, if not comfort.

The death of a young man is always pathetic. If we did not believe in the twelve hours of each man's day, if we did not believe in the great Father who sees the end from the beginning, we should indeed misgive ourselves and accuse the stroke of death as unfeeling, unkind.

THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT.

By the Right Rev. F. Jayne, D.D.,
Bishop of Chester.

Preached at Great St. Mary's, Cambridge, January 24th, 1892.

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."—Matt. xxii. 37, 38.

"The first and great commandment." So it stands in the law of Moses and in the law of Christ. Where does it stand among the affections, the motives, the realities of our own lives? Has it the place of honour and influence? Has it any appreciable place at all? Religion without the love of God "drives heavily," like the Egyptians when their chariot wheels were taken off; and the morality has yet to be found that can long keep sweet and potent and progressive apart from the celestial light and heat which, we have been told, are "needful for carrying the sage along the narrow way perfectly, for carrying the ordinary man along it at all." In the day-time perhaps the cloud may be enough to lead us, but if we are to go all the night through we must have the light of fire.

I.—Is God, the God of nature and of revelation, a fit, a possible, object of our love? He must be loveworthy. Is it easy to believe that God is love? Yes, for two sorts of men, the shallow and the saintly: for those who have

never fairly grappled with the enigmas of life, and have never felt the full significance of the grim creed they lightly hold; and for those who have in the deepest sense "acquainted themselves with God," and who therefore are at peace.

II.—Take, first, the character of God. God is love. Love is a fire; it purifies; it must consume all that is foul and false. God is a God of mercy. Can that mercy have shrunk to the little measure of this present life, and at the hour of death does God's nature change? God is a God of justice, of fair play. The rough-hewn trials and verdicts of this world can be but faint and blurred types of what shall be hereafter. Our hearts can with humble confidence trust the destiny of the creature to its faithful Creator.

III.—Again, the Bible has clear pointings to a final triumph, to a perfect unity in which God shall be all in all. We may fall back with sure confidence upon the great assurance that though "clouds and darkness are round about" God and His dealings with the children of men, still "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His seat."

GOD'S ULTIMATE DESIGN.

By the Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

Preached at Union Chapel, Manchester, January 31st, 1892.

"That, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."—Titus ii. 12.

These words are the Apostle's statement of the ultimate design of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and of all the wonderful powers and gifts which Christ brought with Him.

I.—The fair picture of what our lives should be. "Soberly"—that is what you owe to your own nature;

"righteously"—that is what you owe to people around you; "godly"—that is what you owe to Christ.

II.—Notice what a hard task the man has who will live so. A man cannot be godly unless he casts out the ungodliness that cleaves to his nature, nor can he rule himself and seek after righteousness unless he ejects the desires that reign in his heart. You have to get rid of the bad tenant if you would bring in a good one.

III.—What God gives us to make such life possible. Christ's love coming into the heart expels the evil, just as the sap rising in the trees pushes off the old leaves that have hung there withered all the winter. As Luther used to say, "you cannot clean out the stable with barrows and shovels. Turn the Elbe into it." Let that great flood of life pour into our hearts, and it will not be hard to "live soberly."

DISINTERESTED VIRTUE.

By the Right Rev. W. Boyd Carpenter, D.D.,
Bishop of Ripon.

Preached at St. George's, Bloomsbury, January 31st, 1892.

"Do good and lend, and hope for nothing again."—Luke vi. 35.

A writer has said concerning this sermon, "I must describe it as the great charter of the kingdom of God." Jesus sets before us in very simple language what He believes to be the duty of those who would follow God. What can be simpler than this: "Do good and lend, hoping for nothing again"?

I.—Our Lord sets forth the great principle of the disinterestedness of virtue. There are two principles which this world accepts; one is that virtue should be disinterested, and the other is that virtue should be rewarded. Christ Himself was most strong in His personal declaration that all virtue

should be disinterested. He held up as the very thing to be avoided the example of the Pharisees. "Do good, hoping for nothing again"—that was the key to His thought. These men who did good, and found their reward in the applause of the people—He said of them, with an irony which we can all understand, "Verily they have their reward."

But Christ accepts the principle of reward: "Ye shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just."

In all questions nearly that concern the probability of the reward of merit there are two kinds of reward. There is the natural and the accidental reward, the gain of power and capacity the natural, the gain of success and applause the accidental. Often the accidental rewards are only the golden apples upon Atalanta's path which if she stops to gather she will lose the race.

What is the reward of which Christ speaks? Where is it to be found but in the great law of power and capacity? "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." This is the reward. He that is a child of the Father will be filled with His Spirit. The reward is the realisation of the possibilities of his being, the gift of the Spirit of God within the man, struggling on its way until the spontaneous life of a spiritual childhood is won.

HEREAFTER.

By the Ven. Archdeacon F. W. Farrar, D.D., F.R.S.

Preached at St. Margaret's, Westminster, February 7th, 1892.

"What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."—John xiii. 7.

Until a man has become a partaker of repentance and of forgiveness, he hardly knows how splendidly different life may become to him. Why sin should have been suffered

to exist we cannot understand, but we are sure that it will ultimately be overruled for God's highest ends. How greatly is the frightful mystery alleviated if we see that even on earth the Son of man hath power to forgive sins! If God can thus deal with the problem of sin, all other problems sink into insignificance.

Can you tell me of any thoughts which can lighten the load of this unhappy life except the belief in God's "afterward"? We lean vast hopes on these words of Christ: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." In suffering and sickness this truth is company. Death becomes the best birthright to those who believe in this "afterward" of God. The Christian does not dread it, for it only means the fulfilment of the promise, "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward bring me to glory."

CHRIST WITH THE WILD BEASTS.

By the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll, M.A., LL.D.

February 11th, 1892.

"And He was with the wild beasts."—Mark i. 13.

This was the sudden perception of a soul in stress of conflict. Relaxing one moment from its tense agony, it saw gathered round the wild beasts of the desert. It remembered them in its after-thoughts on the death struggle with more terrible foes.

I.—Can we recall experiences like this in our own life battle? At night, in a great suspense, when the soul is sick, blind, helpless, and the forces of life are warring with one another, there has come a momentary change of mood. The carving of some picture-frame, a face hung on the wall, the blazonry on some book, the chance phrase on an open page —trifles like these fasten themselves on our minds. We

turn dully from them, but the impression is ineffaceable. Even when the memory of the trial grows dim, it is they that keep it living.

Or we have sought under a sudden blow to escape from "the world's grey soul to the green world." On the hillside or the moor we have sat with bowed heads and downcast eyes. It seemed as if we had outlived all loves, buried all hopes. Yet through some chink the flower at our feet enters into the soul, mingles with our thought, and strangely belies our misery. The cup passes from us, and again, again we live. These hours change us, but the memory grows faint for all but that one thing: the flower which we never see without the whole sorrow and relief returning. As Rossetti has expressed it in his poem "The Woodspurge,"—

> "The wind flapped loose, the wind was still,
> Shaken out dead from tree and hill;
> I had walked on at the wind's will,
> I sat now, for the wind was still.
>
> "Between my knees my forehead was—
> My lips drawn in said not, 'Alas!'
> My hair was over in the grass,
> My naked ears heard the day pass.
>
> "My eyes, wide open, had the run
> Of some ten weeds to fix upon;
> Among these few, out of the sun,
> The woodspurge flowered, three cups in one.
>
> "From perfect grief there need not be
> Wisdom or even memory;
> One thing then learnt remains to me:
> The woodspurge has a cup of three."

II.—There must be more in the words than this. Was not the presence of the wild beasts an element in our Lord's temptation?

Did He not see in their eyes an appeal from their misery? Was He not quick to behold the earnest expectation of the

creatures waiting for the manifestation of the Son of God? Did He not long for the day which Esaias saw in vision when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, when the lion shall eat straw with the ox, and the sucking-child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child put his hand on the basilisk's den, and they shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain, that day when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea? We cannot tell, but surely the wild beasts were to Him as they will be to all in the regeneration. Even yet some men exercise strange powers over them; and when He, the creating Word, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, beheld them in His dumb agony, did they not cease one moment to groan and travail, as if they saw their hope in His grief?

III.—For "all creatures can be tamed." The beasts share in our punishment, but not in our guilt. *They* can be won, but man resists. His heart is evil, restless, full of deadly poison. It was to win and purge that heart the Son of God descended, and the arch-temptation was to gain this victory by a shorter and swifter way than the dolorous path. "All the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them," if He had these (so the whisper ran) deliverance would come sooner. These mute appeals, these lowly claims of the wild beasts, reinforced the tempter. But He drove the temptation from Him. The kingdom of glory could not be hastened so. The good day would come in God's time and in God's way; the reign of evil would be undone. So, in compassion for all His travailing creation, His soul went on to travail.

"Get thee behind Me, Satan.
Leave these weak feet to tread in narrow ways;
Thou still upon the broad vine-sheltered path
Mayst wait the turning of the vials of wrath
For certain years, for certain months and days."

THE GOSPEL IN A NUTSHELL.

By the Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

Preached at Union Chapel, Manchester, February 21st, 1892.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."—1 Tim. i. 15.

Condensation is a difficult art. There are few things drier and more unsatisfactory than small books on great subjects, abbreviated statements of large systems. Error lurks in summaries, and yet here the whole fulness of God's communication to men is gathered into a sentence, tiny as a diamond and flashing like it. My text is the one precious drop of essence distilled from gardens full of fragrant flowers.

There are five of these "faithful sayings" in the letters of Paul usually called "the Pastoral Epistles." It seems to have been a manner with him at that time of his life to underscore anything which he felt to be especially important by attaching to it this label.

I.—The Gospel is here in a nutshell. Well, then, if that be so, there are two or three things very important for us to lay to heart. The first is the universality of sin. That is the thing in which we are all alike, dear friends. That is the one thing about which any man is safe in his estimate of another.

But, further, Paul's condensed summary of the Gospel implies the fatal character of this universal sin. "He comes to save," says he.

To me the proof of the fatal effect of sin is what God had to do in order to stop it. Do you think that it would be a small, superficial cut which could be staunched by nothing else but the pierced hand of Jesus Christ?

II.—The reliableness of this condensed Gospel.

III.—The consequent duty and wisdom of acceptance.

Now this phrase, "all acceptation," may mean either of two things: it may either mean worthy of being welcomed by all men, or by the whole of each man.

REALITY REDUPLICATES.

By the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll, M.A., LL.D.

February 25th, 1892.

"We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."—1 John iii. 2.

"We would see Jesus." In the days of His flesh men did see Him, but their eyes were dim, and the veil that covered Him was unrent. Nevertheless there were those who pierced through to the reality, and on whose souls He left some print of His own.

For full vision there needed not the light only, but the vision that could bear it. Once when He gathered His saints to the mountain for anticipation of His sacrifice His glory burst through—"the glory which He had with the Father before the world was." The light was too keen and bright, and they descended the mountain bewildered, with the Companion to whom men should do whatsoever they listed.

They came nearer Him perhaps after He had risen from the dead in the body He has taken for ever. Even then the veil was drawn, though drawn thin and fine. The glory was subdued and attempered till it was supportable, and by the sea of Tiberias, while they gazed in silence, the vision sank deep, and none dared ask Him, "Who art Thou?" knowing that it was the Lord. The nearer and clearer the vision, the deeper the mark it leaves, and the triumphs of the Cross after our Lord had risen bear witness to this.

But a day is coming when all believers shall behold their Lord as He is. The naked soul will front the uncreated Light undazzled, unafraid, rejoicing, receiving. "We shall see Him as He is." Then we shall be like Him. The

reality will double itself on every side. The likeness already begun will be made perfect and eternal.

Consider how the same law acts in every life. It is reality that doubles itself—makes disciples; wins causes; is served by willing martyrs. Our life is much of it sham, little of it real. Our pretensions to knowledge, to talent, to goodwill towards men, to many other things, are vain enough, but the least among God's elect knows in his bitterest hour of the thin but unbreakable thread that joins him to Christ. That is the supreme possession. Now our imposture, conscious or unconscious, may deceive for the time, but it deceives much less than we think, and it has a brief hour. How many of us flatter ourselves that our falsities are so like the real that men do not see through them. Vainest delusion! We are taken to pieces; our make-up is torn off by rough hands; the tinsel and the theatricalities do not serve us even for some short hours of artificial light. Then? Surely there is something more in us than that. When the most merciless censor has had his will, he must yield to all the redeemed something—something of courage, fidelity, love, aspiration. That is the abiding self, and that influences. Goodness, though in things mainly evil; truth, though in things mainly false, is evermore impressive. Or rather it is reality that impresses, that reduplicates, whether it be for good or evil.

Take the home. Children are like their parents. Why? Because they see them as they are. Every mask slips off at times, and it is the face behind that the children grow like. If parents are at heart bad, they know it, and grow like them (unless a stronger force prevents). If the goodness and sweetness of Christ is in father and mother and suffered to make its own impression, it will be in the child also. In a word, the way to influence men for evil is to be evil; the way to influence men for good is to be good. They will be

like you, for they will see you as you are. In the end the real, and nothing but the real, counts.

How wonderful that day will be when we shall see Christ, when we shall truly behold the True! It will come, for "when He shall appear we shall see Him." All things that troubled the clearness of the heart will be over. The eyes will be no more overcast and dark. They will deepen and glow as the first radiance of His face shines over them, and speedily, joyfully, all the nature will pass into the likeness of the unveiled glory of the Lord.

CONTRITION.

By the Rev. Canon Body, M.A.

Preached at Great St. Mary's, Cambridge, February 28th, 1892.

"Oh my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance," etc. Song of Sol. ii. 14.

The message of our Lord to His Church to-day seems to me to find expression here. To us the Song of Solomon comes as a beautiful poem, revealing to us the conditions of Christian life as lived in the love of Jesus Christ our Lord. We do not say that the Song was uttered with any knowledge of this by him who first spake it. Probably he was ignorant of the great interpretation which awaited it in the future; but to us the Song is to be read in the light of our union with Him who is the Bridegroom of His Church. He speaks to His dove in the words we are considering now. This is His cry: "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." A dove is a type of innocency recovered by contrition. Ezekiel is our teacher here. He sees Israel escaped from bondage and restored to her fatherland, and thus describes her dwelling there: "He shall be like the dove on the mountains, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity." And so we are face to face with a

great law of Christian life. Contrition is to be an abiding feature of our life as lived in Christ. It is to be not merely a transitory thing, but our life is to have abidingly in it the feature of contrition.

I.—Contrition is of necessity a feature of Christian life, because the Christian is not wholly free from sin. Does forgiveness destroy contrition? God forbid. It fixes and perfects it in the character, enabling the penitent to live a contrite life. The chiefest of all the sinner's offerings to the Eternal is "a broken and a contrite heart."

II.—How is contrition to be ours? Jesus is educating us in the contrite life, sometimes by a revelation of the reality of God, as it was to Isaiah, sometimes by strange Divine interpositions in the ordinary course of life, sometimes in the course of deep study, as it was with the Magi. Again, Jesus educates us into contrition by the revelation of Himself as the crucified Lord. It was thus when the three thousand were brought to contrition.

III.—Contrition implies not only conviction of sin, but knowledge of God's love. God hates the sin, but loves the sinner. If we would really sing the song of contrition we must sing it in the clefts of the Rock. It is only as we live in union with Him as our Redeemer that we can ever offer Him the contrition that He craves.

SEEKING THE HONOUR WHICH COMES FROM GOD.

By the Very Rev. R. Gregory, M.A.,
Dean of St. Paul's.

Preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, February 28th, 1892.

"How can ye believe which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"—John v. 44.

For all effort, self-sacrifice, and mental development, we need the stimulating influence of some powerful motive. One of

the most powerful motives by which man is impelled to seek the higher course is the desire for honour. Ambition, love of power, the craving for success, suffice to stimulate many to ceaseless labour. These witness to that desire for honour of which our text speaks. But it also speaks of two external authorities from which that honour may be sought.

I.—Those who seek the honour which comes from man. Their view is confined to this world, and largely to the present. Their supreme aim is the exaltation of self. There may be along with this some sense of religion, and the externals of religion will be diligently attended to.

II.—Our Lord here teaches us that these various ways of seeking honour from men have a tendency to rob us of our faith in Him. He asks, "How can ye believe which receive honour one of another?" The mind is bent by it in the opposite direction, and is encouraged to believe in the value and reality of external things and the power of self. These characteristics were the distinguishing marks of the Pharisees. Look, too, at Cicero: how continually does the sense of his own greatness and goodness crop up in his writings.

III.—Those who seek honour from God only. If to seek it from men ministers to pride, to seek it from God tends to humility. Man has to regard the motives from which his actions spring as well as the actions themselves. Then we recognise that in us dwells no good thing, but that from Christ we may obtain all good.

THE PHARISEE IN THE TEMPLE.

By the Rev. John McNeill, M.A.

Preached at St. George's Parish Church, Glasgow, March, 1892.

"And He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others," etc.—Luke xviii. 9–14.

Neither the publican nor the Pharisee has died away. The Pharisee dies hard as long as you and I are above ground.

God desires that men who would worship Him should do so aright. We either find Him or we miss Him by the whole heaven.

I.—He stood and prayed with himself. The attitude was wrong. A high look is an abomination to God. His prayer as a prayer never reached God; it only went backward and forward, like a weaver's shuttle, from himself to himself.

II.—He gave God thanks. It is right to give God thanks, but has it the right ring of true grace or the leaden sound that marks the counterfeit?

III.—He fasted and gave tithes. That man had the dry-rot of giving, as well as of praying and fasting.

It is the Pharisees, proud and haughty, who keep the poor publicans outside the Church to-day. You will never reach the lapsed outside the Church until you reach the lapsed inside the Church.

ABIDING IN CHRIST.

By the Rev. Canon W. J. Knox-Little, M.A.

Preached at St. Peter's, Cranleigh Gardens, March 3rd, 1892.

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye except ye abide in Me."—John xv. 4.

What are the great conditions that mark real Christianity?

I.—We can only learn those conditions from Him who is the Divine Founder of the Christian Church. He is quite distinct in placing His conditions before us.

II.—"Except ye abide in Me"—that is the principle of Christian life. Without that there is no real goodness, no final penitence, no illumination.

III.—Jesus reminds us that we may have assistance from above.

IV.—There is free-will in man. Man can choose to be a Christian.

V.—There must be exertion, and upon that depends morality. The moment we make the exertion to do right, then we are in a higher world.

Those are the principles which lay at the base of the teachings of Jesus. "Abide in Me, and I in you." Except ye abide in Christ, ye are not Christians.

THE DANGER AND THE PAIN OF THE PURE.

By the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll, M.A., LL.D.

March 10th, 1892.

"Hereafter I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me."—John xiv. 30.

There is something of paradox in this word, which arrests attention. He speaks as if He could not talk because He had to fight. The fight was manifestly to Him the gravest of all struggles—it was with the prince of this world—and yet He declared that the prince of this world had nothing in Him. What makes a conflict with the prince of evil so terrible to us is that he has so much in us. Yet to Christ the terror of the battle was that Satan had nothing in Him, and so great was this terror that He could hardly spare strength to speak.

I.—Our Lord's words cost Him something: "Hereafter I will not talk much with you." "What," says a famous writer, "is anything worth until it is uttered? Is not the universe one great utterance? Utterance there must be in word or deed to make life of any worth. Every true pentecost is a gift of utterance." But for the most part our words are idle; they come with no sweat of brain or

heart. Yet never can we say anything fruitful, or sweet, or strong without cost—without labour, feeling, effort, soul, behind it. Every word of Jesus will outlive earth and heaven. To the end all His recorded utterances continually will disclose further and yet further deeps of meaning. He talked much, more than we know; yet if we may dare say it, He could afford to waste no word, and when He girded Himself for the last battle, He fell silent.

II.—"*Hereafter* I will not talk much with you." Solemn are the silencings of life, the strange hush that drops on lips once gay, free, lilting, sometimes after a great agony.

"You took my heart in your hand,
With a friendly smile,
With a critical eye you scanned,
Then set it down.

* * * *

As you set it down it broke—
Broke, but I did not wince;
I smiled at the speech you spoke,
At your judgment that I heard;
But I have not often smiled
Since then, nor questioned much,
Nor cared for cornflowers wild,
Nor sung with the singing bird."

He means it—this stilling of pulse and voice—whether it comes after the battle or before, and His purpose is that our life, if more silent to man, should be fuller of utterance to Him.

III.—See our Lord's estimate of Satan. To Him the enemy of souls was terrible; how much more to us. Our war is still with elements which no progress of civilisation can rob of a single weapon. We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world. No possible social

progress can ever change materially the conditions of the spiritual warfare, where our first foe is Satan.

IV.—But whence the terror of the struggle to One in whose pure heart the enemy had no place? We can only compare remotely our own case with His, for Christ was never at any point peccable, and the obedience which He learned through suffering was simply the concrete experience of what He had to pass through that He might fulfil His calling as the Author of eternal salvation. But when we descend to the brothers and sisters, humanly frail, whom we nevertheless not untruly call pure, we can understand how the danger and the pain of the temptation may be greatest in their case.

The danger, for they are ignorant. They have never looked over the gulf. They do not even know that they are on the edge. They are ignorant of the devices of Satan.

The pain, for as region after region of a pure nature is invaded by the breath of pollution the agony is far keener than that of a more or less seared nature. The more innocent a human soul, the more terrible is the knowledge of evil, and the discovery that something to which that evil appeals lurks within itself.

The secrets of the grim, silent battle fought by our Head, we cannot tell. Thereafter He did not talk much. But we know that He sweated great drops of blood; that He prayed that if it were possible the cup might pass from Him; that He turned round in His agony to see beside Him the mild and holy face of an angel who had brought Him strength from heaven In that strength He prevailed for Himself, and in Him we may "triumph so," and find at last—

> "Under our feet for ever
> The enemies of our souls."

THE SACRIFICE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

By the Rev. Charles Gore, M.A.,
Principal of Pusey House.

Preached at the Temple Church, London, March 13th, 1892.

"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ."—Heb. ix. 13, 14.

Of what sort was Christ's sacrifice? Wherein lay its acceptableness? The apostolic writer of this Epistle finds the distinctive character of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in four points.

I.—It was an offering of a person; it was *self*-sacrifice: "He offered Himself to God." All the faculties of man are to be directed, not only towards nature, not only towards his fellow-men, but also deliberately Godward, and that first of all. This is for us supremely exemplified in the human life of Jesus. That life looked manward in loving ministry, but first of all it looked Godward in self-oblation: "Lo, I come to do Thy will."

II.—He offered Himself *without spot or blemish.* The metaphor is from the inspection of the victim prepared for sacrifice. In the Lamb of God the scrutiny of the All-seeing Eye can detect no disqualifying flaw. He was the beloved Son in whom the Father, "the great Scrutiner" of human oblation, was well pleased.

III.—It was a *spiritual* sacrifice; spirit was the sphere in which He offered Himself: "in spirit." Sacrifice is spiritual which, like the sacrifice of Jesus, is expressed in the body—for it was an offering of the body of Jesus once for all—but which carries with it an act of real homage on the part of the intelligence and of the will. Something spiritual is to be found in all sacrifices, some recognition of truth, some movement of the will. God judges things moral, not by the standard of their attainment, but by the

moral movement which they involve. God judges a man, not by that moral equipment from which he starts, not by the moral level that he has reached, but by the amount of moral movement in his life.

There is no failure in our own personal lives excepting ceasing to try. The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before the Pharisees evermore, because the Pharisee is the man who has ceased to make effort. He has ceased to aspire, desire, strive. Therefore he is dead. The spirituality of the Jewish system lay in the rightness of its direction. It was a system under which the Divine education in the crude Semitic habit of sacrifice was gradually organised and spiritualised. The Divine education of the Jew pointed on to Jesus, in whom it was fulfilled. This sacrifice was material, visible, objective, but His sacrifice is supremely spiritual. Its whole moral meaning lies in the obedience it involved. When His action on behalf of truth, and meekness, and righteousness involved the martyr's death, He accepted the conditions, and offered the shedding of His blood; but in God's light the shedding of the blood of Jesus had no value except as the symbol of an obedience carried to the extreme.

IV.—The spirit in which He offered Himself was the "eternal spirit." What is taught is that Christ's act and sacrifice was not only human, but Divine. The spirit expressed in it was not changeable, created, but eternal. The meaning and value of the act is unchangeable. Nothing in the act of sacrifice of Jesus is merely temporary or inadequate. Jesus could plead the outpoured blood as an accepted sacrifice even before His death, at the institution of the Eucharist: "This is My blood, which is being shed for you." How much more shall the blood of Christ, that blood which expressed perfect moral homage, that blood of Him who offered Himself without blemish be-

fore the face of God—how much more shall that blood purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God!

GOD'S OMNISCIENCE.

By the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, M.A.

Preached at St. James's Hall, London, March 20th, 1892.

"There is nothing covered up that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known."—Luke xii. 2.

These words Jesus repeated over and over again. He evidently felt that the information which they conveyed was of tremendous and supreme importance.

We are all more or less alive to the fact that we shall all stand at the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ. He will turn the electric search-light of Divine omniscience upon every soul. Then there will be no secrets with anybody. The whole universe will know literally everything about us.

Human lives on earth are treble. (1) There is what we appear to be to other people; (2) what we appear to be to ourselves (and we are capable of extraordinary self-delusion). (3) There is what we really are in the sight of God. Then all our masks will be taken off.

I.—What hope there is in this fact for the victims of earthly injustice!

II.—What consolation for the tender-hearted who are distressed at the apparent triumph of mighty wickedness!

III.—What a message of doom to the finally impenitent!

THE EFFORT OF FAITH.

By the Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

Preached at Union Chapel, Manchester, March 26th, 1892.

"I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."—Ps. xvi. 8.

I.—The effort of faith: "I have set the Lord always before me." It took a dead lift of conscious effort for the

Psalmist to keep himself in touch with the unseen God. This is the voice of true love, and true love is true religion—"*always* before me," like a long band of light running through the whole life. In the lives of far too many so-called Christians the points of light are dim and far apart, as in some ill-lighted back street.

II.—The Ally of faith: "He is at my right hand." The Divine presence is the source of all strength and blessedness.

III.—The courageous stability of faith: "I shall not be moved." How quietly we may live above the storms if only we live in God! Some workmen in London in the last fogs happened to be engaged in repairing the weathercock upon a tall steeple, and when they got to the top they found that they were in the sunshine, with blue sky above them, and all the noise of the city below their feet, there in the blackness. If you will get high enough you will be far above the reach of the agitations and distractions of this life. Because "He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."

THE SAINT'S PLEA FOR INTERCESSION.

By the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll, M.A., LL.D.

April 7th, 1892.

"Pray for us; for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner."—Heb. xiii. 18, 19.

Intercessors—unknown intercessors—are, it may well be, the true rulers of the world. Vaster even than the mystery of personal supplication is that of intercession. For when we plead for ourselves, our will goes with the plea; we ask God to help us in what we desire ourselves. When we intercede it is for those who know not that we pray, who if

they did might scorn us, whose purpose and whose way may be directly contrary to our asking. Yet the prodigal son, the daughter wild and wicked and far gone down to hell, are often prayed for in an agony, earnestly, and yield with wonder to a strange constraint.

Here a saint asks to be prayed for, and the reason he gives is noteworthy. He does not say, "Pray for us; for we are tried and in peril, and our faith fails." His faith was of them that believe to the saving of the soul, his courage high and unshaken; he had the answer of a good conscience towards God and man. "We are persuaded that we have a good conscience, desiring in all things to conduct ourselves well." He asked to be prayed for because he knew his purpose was pure, and he wished to behold again the faces of his friends.

I.—We may say that the saints are never out of peril. A good thing has been committed to them, which they have to keep against all assault till they bring it to the Lord's house at Jerusalem. They have all eyes upon them to mark a stumble. The road is narrow, and on either side are deep descents. They are beset by enemies, one watchful foe above the rest. It is in the noonday of their joy and attainment that they have most reason to fear. "Pray for us."

II.—Here, however, the thought rather is, We have a claim. Help us; we are doing our best. We spread all our sails for a wind of God; we are willing to be borne before it. Stir up for us the succours of grace. Let the breeze rise and take us where we fain would be.

III.—"That they without us should not be made perfect." Is there some suggestion of this? In the Church of Christ we offend if we say of the humblest believer, "I have no need of thee." We need on every side, because we are low-minded and low-thoughted, and our eyes cleave to the dust—

the dark dust of sorrow, if not the glittering dust of vanity. What if God does not mean that we shall reach the highest unless we use all the forces He has put within our reach? Have we not despised them? What have we done to secure an interest in the prayers of poor saints? How often, let us think, are our names named at night before the throne of grace? If they are little mentioned it is because we have not sought, because we have even despised the intercession that might have been ours. The crowning grace may be still denied to a great saint because he has not begged for prayers. How rich the Church might have been for that life if some faults had been absent, if some graces had been added! What is the secret? We may trace it here.

IV.—"But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner." Here is prayer for what is called temporal good. In all spheres prayer is power, and the reason why it does not always prevail simply is the wiser love of God. But this man had the Spirit of God; he was wise and loving also; and so God let him have his way. We, too, have our way among the things of the world, if we have "a good conscience, desiring in all things to conduct ourselves well." God is "sorry for our childishness"; does not willingly keep from us the toys we set our hearts on; would let us have them if it were safe for us. Why have I not succeeded? Because success would have turned my head. Why am I not rich? Because riches would have led me into temptation I had no strength to resist. So all our days we are minished and brought low; we cannot tell why; and yet the reason is plain to others and plain to God.

But some men and women hardly ever ask anything without receiving it. The promises all come true to them in the largest sense without check or limit, because they

have not used or coveted the great gifts of God for themselves, because they have found their treasure and their rest in Christ.

THE DUTY OF WORK.

By the Rev. J. Monro Gibson, D.D.

Preached at Marlborough Road Presbyterian Church, May 8th, 1892.

"If any would not work, neither should he eat."—2 Thess. iii. 10.

What if this law were enforced in London to-day? There would be more destitution in Belgravia than in Bethnal Green. Yet this is the law of the Divine order. The Apostle speaks of those who did not keep this law as of those "who walk disorderly." But every law has its exception; and there are those who cannot work through illness, and are obliged to eat bread which they have not earned. As for those who are content to eat and not work, a stone-breaker leads a more honourable life than they.

This rule of the Apostle, that whoever does not work has no right to eat, applies to both sexes. The young lady has as much to work for her bread as her brothers. Woe to her if she lives a life of uselessness and frivolity! Most of us, however, have the advantage of being compelled to work for our daily bread.

This injunction applies equally to things spiritual as well as bodily. It is true in regard to Christian activity. Work stands for giving, and eating for getting. Is not life a free gift of God, and receiving is all we have to do? Yes, it is not by doing, but by believing, we are to be saved. "By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." In the act of receiving we give ourselves to God. So in the act of receiving there is also a giving of ourselves. All genuine faith has this element of self-surrender, and genuine faith is always followed by work.

What could be better than the joy of Christ? What was His joy? Receiving? No; it was the joy of giving blessings untold to hearts and homes and nations. Without hard work you cannot share in Christ's work and joy. Are any joyless Christians here to-day? If you think that those who speak of the joy of Christian living are given to exaggeration, then be sure there is something wrong with yourselves. Probably there is something not given up, something of the flesh not yet crucified, which proves an obstruction to God's grace.

Then there are some Christians who are willing to be perfectly pure, and yet they are joyless. Theirs may be the fault of shortcoming, of laziness and want of a true devotion to God.

Some of us lose a great deal by dividing our life into two parts. So much—the greater part—is devoted to ourselves; the rest is God's. One-tenth is God's; nine-tenths is ours. We seem to think that God's kingdom means missions and such-like philanthropies, but it is a much wider thing. God's kingdom ruleth over all. He gives us our work in the world, and He will accept our daily tasks as work for Himself. "Present your bodies as living sacrifices, which is your reasonable service"—that includes the brain and all the energies of your nature—"that ye may prove what is that perfect will of God." Our Father in heaven contemplates our satisfaction, nothing else. Lay at the Lord's feet each day as it comes, and what a satisfaction you will find!

Jesus said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work." He found His meat in His work. What spiritual returns should we have then! It is faithfulness in our several stewardships we require. There is no telling what positive harm is done by the unfaithful, unprofitable servant.

THE WISH OF CHRIST.

By the Rev. Prebendary Eyton, M.A.

Preached at St. Paul's Cathedral, May 15th, 1892.

"Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory."—John xvii. 24.

What, if you could know it, would be the final test by which you could judge of any one's life? *Words* may be used to conceal thought; actions may be designed to conceal the real drift of life. If we would know the real truth about others and about ourselves, we must go deeper, we must find the ruling desire, the thing to which the heart most naturally recurs.

The key-note of character is desire, and that for good or evil. Christ's desire, as expressed in the text, shows the perfection of His nature.

There is more in Christ's desire than the mere wish to be in company with His dearest friends. Human emotion is always capable of taking a higher and a lower form. There is a desire for companionship not very different from that of animals. It is mere propinquity that they desire. A higher companionship than that is similarity of work and occupation. There is a higher companionship still: that of sharing the same ideas and opinions. But higher than all these lies the great companionship—companionship in character; sympathy, resemblance, in what lies deepest. Time and place have no power over that sort of oneness; it belongs to the eternal region. And it was in this highest way that Christ wished others to be with Him. That is the way that we must test our lives. Could you say with Christ, "I wish you were like me"?

It is not good for any man to be living a life which he would not universalise, if he could. Never consent to be anything that you would not ask the soul which is dearest to you in the world to be.

Thus it is that we understand the full depths of Christ's wish for His disciples. To be with Christ is to be like Christ. Nevertheless that wish that they should be physically with Christ meant something; to see His face, to walk with Him, meant something. God has taught us in these latter days to think of heaven more as a character than a place. The essence of happiness is holiness, not being in some place.

Christ's dearest wish is that we should be like Him, and when He speaks further of showing His glory to His Apostles, it is a wish that they may have eyes to see His goodness. For the glory of God is not in His power, but in His goodness. Only the good can understand goodness.

Let us remember every act of self-sacrifice, every burden patiently borne, every duty fulfilled, satisfies the deepest wish of Christ's heart. We cannot become good by leaps and bounds, but we can seize our opportunities and put ourselves in the way of Christlike influences, and so we shall be more and more with Him now until we become perfectly like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

CONTRITION, REPENTANCE, AND SALVATION.

By the Rev. Canon Body, D.D.

Preached at St. Paul's, Knightsbridge, May 20th, 1892.

"Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation."—2 Cor. vii. 10.

Thus St. Paul describes to us the inner steps whereby God leads the sinner back to Himself. He says that there are three stages: contrition, or *godly sorrow*; *repentance*; and *salvation*. If you consider the story of Mary of Magdala, you will see illustrated the three stages of return to God of which my text speaks.

I.—See our Lord Jesus bringing a sinner to godly sorrow for sin. There was for sinners such as Mary in the days in which she lived in Capernaum, so far as the Church was

concerned, no place of repentance, though sought for with tears. Some words of Jesus steal into her heart, and work a revolution in her character. With the kindling of hope there comes true contrition. What a sinner wants is "heartening." Speak to the sinner, not words of rebuke, but words of love.

II.—Next, see the repentance which contrition works. This repentance is a separating power and also an attracting power. The sinner, if he is really led along the road of repentance aright, always goes home like Mary and fetches the alabaster box; he always takes that which has been to him the accessory of his sin, and breaks it at the feet of Jesus. Repentance draws to Jesus. It drew Mary to the house where Jesus was.

III.—All this is salvation. Mary was saved from the tyranny of sin and admitted to the friendship of Jesus. And to these gifts was given the gift of perseverance. First at the tomb on Easter morning is Mary of Magdala, and the last time we read of her in the sacred story she is numbered with the disciples who kept the first retreat the Church ever kept.

What was true of old is true to-day, if we will but really yield ourselves up to the inworking of that Holy Spirit who creates contrition, and through it makes repentance, and leads to salvation not to be repented of.

A MEMORABLE QUESTION.

By the Ven. Archdeacon F. W. Farrar, D.D., F.R.S.

Preached at St. Margaret's, Westminster, May 29th, 1892.

"Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle, and who shall rest on Thy holy hill?"—Ps. xv. 1.

What sort of answer would you have expected David to make to this memorable question? We should have thought it a natural answer if he had said priests, or great leaders like Moses, or old prophets whose lips God had touched. We should have expected some mark of con-

secration, some spiritual absorption, some transcendent excellence, as a condition in any one who aspired to such near access to God. What does David answer? "Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life and doeth the thing which is right," etc. Here then you have the things necessary for the man who may receive the blessing of nearness to God. Strange, they are precisely those things we should demand of the ordinary English gentleman, tradesman, workman. You might be tempted to say, "Surely David puts the scale too low." If you think the terms easy upon which these high blessings are to be realised, the explanation is not that the blessing itself is thought to be a light one. Is it so small a thing to "keep innocency and do the right thing"? The New Testament is with David here. In almost every page it lays down the rule, "If thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments."

David's truth and the truth of Christ Himself is that every one who desires to be near God must "depart from iniquity." Like David, St. Paul makes your admission into the near presence of God consist in a pure heart and a loving heart. That "mere morality" St. Paul considered necessary for his converts. He dwells on it in one half of each of his Epistles; and from him they would get no mere flattery, no mere self-inflating food.

You can only keep innocency and do the thing that is right by the aid of the ascended Christ and the Spirit He will give.

THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT.

By the Rev. Professor W. Sanday, M.A., D.D.

Preached at Great St. Mary's, Cambridge, May 29th, 1892.

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind," etc.—Phil. iii. 13, 14.

A few days ago I took such survey as I could of the field of Biblical criticism. What I seemed to see there was

remarkable and rapid progress, with good promise for the future. The one danger was the danger of premature solutions, put forward too confidently and acquiesced in too easily. I turn to-day to another subject: to the "social movement," the desire for the practical reform of society and for the bettering of the condition of the poor and labouring classes.

Here, too, much advance has been made; and here the great danger seems to me the urging in practice of premature solutions. The one great caution which we need is that which the Apostle lays down for himself in our text.

The fact of the material advance in one respect increases our responsibilities. We have had, and are having, our fat kine; are there not lean kine to follow? At present the war of classes in this country has not yet seriously begun; we may, if we take things in time, anticipate it, and carry the whole nation onwards together. The improvement of the condition of the poor is a noble object, but a still nobler thing would be if all classes would work together for the common good of all. The man who sets class against class is doing deep and grievous wrong to humanity as a whole. The greatest danger to which the English are exposed is the danger of acting before they think. In social questions it is essential to have a well-considered policy. What is the duty of the Church and the clergy in regard to social theories and social movements? How far ought they to be taken up by the clergy?

The one limit which is put upon the Christian philosopher is that his theories shall not be un-Christian. Neither our theories nor our practice may conflict with Christianity. Society seems to rest upon a basis of evolution. Christianity has come in to mitigate the fierceness of the struggle for existence; but the struggle has gone on all through Christian times, and goes on still. Both our Lord and the Apostles

accepted the constitution of society as it was. They tried to change life in society, but they did not try to change the conditions on which society rested. There is no indication in the whole of the New Testament of either our Lord or His Apostles making themselves champions of the rights of class as against class or of man as against man. Jesus came to reform the world, not on a national basis, nor yet on a class basis, but by teaching that he who saved his life should lose it, and he who lost his life for His sake should find it.

The principle of St. Paul and St. Peter alike is that Christianity can adapt itself either to freeman or slave. True Christian life moves in a sphere which the accidents of outward condition do not touch. Therefore the Christian teacher *is* called upon to enforce duties as duties; he is *not* called upon to claim, defend, or champion rights as rights. The whole sphere of "rights" seems to me to lie outside his province. I venture to think that the attitude of the clergy should be one of reserve: that they should not be too ready to volunteer services that are not asked for, the object to be kept in view being that the Church may not be implicated in action which may embarrass her in her own more proper sphere.

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL.

By the Rev. James Stalker, D.D.

Preached at Free St. Matthew's Church, Glasgow, May 29th, 1892.

"The everlasting Gospel."—Rev. xiv. 6.

There is only one Gospel which is everlasting.

What makes the Gospel of Christ everlasting?

I.—It is a message to what is universal in man. Glance at the most outstanding words of the Gospel to see this. Take the words "soul," "sin," "eternity." The Gospel tells how the soul is to be saved, how sin is to be blotted

out, how eternity is to be transmuted from a dream of terror into a home and an inheritance.

II.—It is a message to what is peculiar in every man. In this also lies its claim to be everlasting. God has a special message for every age; His Gospel has a word in season for every condition of life. Each man's lot is the appointment of God, and each man's circumstances are a discipline through which God is leading him to Himself. The Chinese when they accept the Gospel will find secrets in it which the British have never discovered. We have not exhausted Christ in His Gospel.

TWO WITNESSES.

By the Ven. Archdeacon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S.

Preached at St. Margaret's, Westminster, June 5th, 1892.

"The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."—Rom. viii. 16.

Our text tells us a sublime truth, tested by a twofold witness. The truth is that we are children of God. The twofold witness is within us and without us: it is the witness of our human spirit; it is the corroborative witness of the Holy Spirit of God.

What do we mean by our spirit? The human spirit is the highest element of human nature. Scripture analyses all our human nature into the three elements of body, soul, and spirit. We all know what the body is; the soul is the intellectual element of our nature; the spirit is the one Divine, eternal, incorruptible element of man. The spirit tells us we are children of God and heirs of immortality.

You cannot say that you do not hear the witness of the spirit within you, for all have heard it. Yet it is possible for any one of us to quench the spirit within us—strangle its voice, and extinguish it. If we neglect our spiritual being it dies. Every faculty grows by use, and perishes by neg-

lect. Only when we try to live to the spirit do we feel the witness of the spirit and discern the things of the spirit.

When we live the spiritual life our spirits become the reflection and the irradiation of the Spirit of God within us, and the sublime truth that we are the children of God is witnessed by the Spirit of God and by our spirits. Christ gives His Holy Spirit to them that seek Him in order "that we may be children of God."

THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT.

By the Rev. Charles Gore, M.A.
Principal of Pusey House.

Preached at Westminster Abbey, June 26th, 1892.

"And one of them, which was a lawyer, asked Him a question tempting Him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."—Matt. xxii. 36.

I.—To love God with all the heart. This is the first and great commandment: to love God. We know what love is. "With all thy heart," etc. In Holy Scripture the heart means that from which all action proceeds; and to love God with all our heart means to direct the whole current of our being towards God. We cannot control our feelings, but we can direct by our will the current of our life. The lives of men move towards some one end. In the case of a religious man the life is directed towards the glory of God. He seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, that is, to love God with all the heart.

II.—To love God with all the soul. The soul in the Bible means what we in modern English should call the life. A life is the sum of faculties. Deliberately direct your faculties to God's service.

III.—With all the mind. We can know a great deal about God. Holy Scripture speaks of certain stages of witness which God bears to Himself in nature, in man, and in Christ.

IV.—With all the strength. Whatever there be in our life, it degenerates perpetually into routine and tends to dry up, and where is its reality unless it be constantly renewed? So in religious life. It is not enough to have started with deliberate resolutions to love God in will and faculty and intellect. It must be again and again renewed, as perseverance is a perpetuity of fresh beginnings.

On this great duty and privilege of religion I make three remarks :—

(1) This is a high religion, but it is in a religion that reaches high that you find joy and power. There are so many people who have enough religion to make them unhappy, but who have not enough to give them the power and joy of sonship. God made you for sonship. You have been made to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever. It is a personal religion. Appeal to God as a personal Father ; and, be it through suffering or joy, His fatherly love will come out to meet the efforts of sonship.

(2) Pray for this, because the love of God is the gift of God. You cannot love God except by the power which God gives you.

(3) This is no religion for a few select natures. It is the common, it is the first, the great commandment. You have a nature which is meant for God. Unquiet is the heart of man until it rests on Him.

JUDAS.

By the Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

Preached at Union Chapel, Manchester, June 26th, 1892.

"Then said Jesus unto Judas, That thou doest, do quickly."—John xiii. 27.

I.—The voice of despairing love abandoning the conflict, Because the will of Judas had welcomed Satan and conclusively rejected Christ, "*therefore* said Jesus unto him."

II.—The voice of strangely blended majesty and humiliation: "That thou doest, do." Every Judas is unconsciously the servant of Him whom he seeks to betray, and finds out, to his bewilderment, that what he meant for a death-blow is the very purpose and will of the Lord.

III.—The voice of instinctive human weakness: "Do quickly." Better to suffer than to wait for suffering.

IV.—The voice of the willing Sacrifice for the sins of the world. Why was Christ so eager that His death should be accomplished? (1) Because He would obey the Father's will; (2) because He loved the whole world. These were the cords that bound Him to the altar. When Jesus says to us in regard of repentance and faith and Christian consecration and service, "That thou doest, do quickly," let us answer, "I made haste, and delayed not."

THE VICTOR'S REWARD.

By the Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

Preached at Union Chapel, Manchester, July 3rd, 1892.

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."—Rev. ii. 7.

If language has any meaning these are the direct words of Jesus Christ Himself, speaking from heaven. John was merely an amanuensis, writing at the dictation of Jesus. The heavenly Christ speaks from heaven "to the Churches."

We think far too little, brothers, of these great promises of a future life. To Jesus Christ, and to Him alone, I believe, do we owe the certainty of anything beyond the grave.

I.—The victor's reward. (1) There is the substance: the promise of life. (2) There is the form of the promise.

It carries us back to the beginning of Scripture, and reminds us of the story of Eden and the tree of life there. So the end circles round to the beginning, and the purpose of God shall be fulfilled, and more than fulfilled, and all the weary centuries, with their sin, and crime, and failures, shall be, as it were, in a parenthesis.

II.—We have, again, the Giver of the reward. Jesus Christ steps into the place here of the absolute Disposer of all human affairs and Settler of man's destiny. In another place in Scripture we read that the gift of God is eternal life; here the Giver of it is Jesus Christ.

III.—And now one word, and it shall only be a word, about what I meant to make the last part of this sermon, viz., the condition of receiving: "To him that overcometh." Well, then, all noble life in the world is a fight. And to say, "I trust in Jesus Christ," is not enough unless that trust manifests itself in strenuous antagonism to evil and realises victory over it.

And how is that victorious life to be achieved? "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." I have said that mere trust without conflict and conquest cannot inherit the crown, but I also say that wherever there is the true trust there will be conflict, and wherever there is the trusting conflict there will be victory.

ESAU.

By the Rev. Professor George Adam Smith, M.A.

Preached at Free High Church, Edinburgh, July 10th, 1892.

"Any profane person like Esau."—Heb. xii. 16

I.—Esau was sinned against from his birth. The problems of heredity and of a stress of temptation for which

he was not responsible appear in his case from the first. Of a false and hasty mother Esau was born. Esau never showed her falseness, but he had all her haste, and he proved it in his man's strength. Sin always works itself out, if not in the first generation, in the next, to violent ends. The faults that spoiled Rebekah's character were the same that ruined Esau's life.

II.—Esau was profane. "Profane" means "thoroughfare," and had a Greek been wanting to put up "No thoroughfare" upon any road, he would have expressed it probably in the original word in this text: "Not profane." It meant ground that was common and public—profane. Esau's life was profane, not walled in by reverence and truth and steadfast patience.

III.—The climax. Look at two habits which came to their fatal head in Esau's speech, "Behold, I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" First hunger, and second the habit of thinking in exaggeration. These two commonplace selfishnesses, fed and fostered through a thousand half-conscious and now forgotten acts, sprang that day to fatal empire, and at their bidding the deluded man sold his birthright. Little passions, not big passions, betray us. His passion made him the prey of the first designing man he came across.

IV.—Fence your characters; make yourselves not common. Be on your guard against the little vices; it is they that first desecrate the soul.

Jacob was as bad a man as could be, with rotten heart and flaccid will, but he repented and turned to God, and that was what made the whole difference between him and his nobler-charactered brother. Whoever puts his hand in Christ's and lets into his heart the burning love of Christ may, like Jacob, be lifted from his low level to the very heights of spiritual character and genius.

THE OPENED DOOR.

By the Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

Preached at Union Chapel, Manchester, July 10th, 1892.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door," etc.—Rev. iii. 20.

I.—The Suppliant for admission. Who knocks? The exalted Christ. What is the door? This closed heart of man. What does He desire? Entrance. What are His knockings and His voice? All providences, all monitions of His Spirit in man's spirit, and conscience; the direct invitations of His word.

II.—The door opened. Notice that "the door" has no handle outside, and is so hinged that it opens from within outwards. To do nothing is to keep your Saviour outside; and that is the way in which most men that miss Him do miss Him. The condition of His entrance is simple trust in Him as the Saviour of the soul.

III.—The entrance and the feast. "I will come in to him," is not a metaphor, but the very heart and centre of the Gospel. When He comes in, He comes as Guest. "I will sup with him." When He is welcomed as Guest, He assumes the place of Host. "And he with Me."

THE DAY OF RECOLLECTION.

By the Rev. R. F. Horton, M.A.

Preached at Lyndhurst Road Church, Hampstead, July 10th, 1892.

"Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day."—Gen. xli. 9.

We all know something personally of lapse of memory. Memory only acts under a certain stimulus. When strong emotions appeal, the weakest mind remembers. A mother

does not forget to feed her infant; a lover does not forget the trysting-place and the appointed hour.

It is not difficult to understand that the chief butler forgot his promise to Joseph. In the excitement of his release from prison and of the hanging of his fellow-servant, he did forget all about his promise; and afterwards he felt his own position to be too precarious to venture to speak to Pharaoh about Joseph. Silence was the prudent course to pursue. And so the quick months passed into years, and if his conscience ever rebuked him, he would silence its voice by saying that it was only a matter of time. Two years passed before the promise was redeemed. And this was quite natural. I have known people who, under the shadow of death and sickness, have said, "This shall teach me a lesson. I will seek God and forsake sin"; and after they got better they dismissed all these sacred promises as fevered dreams, and hated to hear them referred to. After two years of forgetfulness this chief butler recollected. Gratitude is not any commoner now than in the time of Pharaoh's butler. I remember hearing that when a certain eminent statesman went out of power he met several bishops whom he had himself appointed, and they passed him without recognition. "Ah," he said, "the reverend prelates, like lesser persons, forget their creator."

I.—The great feature of what we call the judgment-day is this sudden recollection. Events and words which we have completely forgotten at the touch of some chance allusion start up again to recollection. It is as if treasures were buried in the cellars of the mind and left their tokens on the floor above. These tokens get quickly worn and defaced; but they are there: touch them, and the treasures are all disclosed. Every one of these may be forgotten, but they are all to be reproduced, not at will,

but under some stimulus, when all our being and life is alive and brought into recollection. Our modern explorers in Egypt tell us of finding the mummies of the kings wrapped in shrouds, on which the names and dates are inscribed, and the history of their achievements. Egyptologists could read these forgotten kings' histories on their shrouds. Much in the same way as these shrouds, the record of life is being wound round you every day. You forget what is written on previous foldings; but all is capable of being unwound, and all the character stands forth. There you can read how the character of the boy made the man, how the habits of youth moulded the character in riper years, how the wrong choice worked out ruin later on. Our life is written in our persons. The story is the man you are, and the reading of that story is the day of judgment. Then our sins shall be set in the light of God's countenance. The masks will drop off then, and the true person will be revealed. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus Abraham says, "Son, remember," and the whole life comes back. Abraham does not need to argue to point the moral of the tale; recollection is enough.

Some men speak lightly of this judgment-day, as if they could hold up their heads before God's presence. They mean to speak in this wise: "I never asked to be born"; "I was not responsible; circumstances shaped my life"; "Thou art a hard Master, reaping where Thou hast not sown and gathering where Thou hast not strawed."

All this is simply due to the fact that the moment of recollection does not come to such people. What such people imagine they shall say so glibly will stick in their teeth on that day. We shall not be able to plead in His presence. It is well to remember how different we shall feel then.

I shall never forget the effect which Berlioz's *Masse des*

Morts had upon an immense audience, of which the late Cardinal Newman was one. At the point when in the music the trumpet seems to sound, and the dead stand before God, I looked round me, and the effect was visible on every face. The figures of those present seemed to have shrunken. The hall was crowded, but now there seemed to be empty spaces. From Cardinal Newman to the most insignificant listener, every one seemed to realise what the judgment-day must mean. I myself caught a glimpse of what it will be.

II.—Is it not very evident that we should try to remember our faults *this* day, and not wait for that other day of judgment, as the judgment then is not determined by an arbitrary Judge of the world, but by our own lives and characters? Surely no one can be satisfied to live in a fool's paradise, to bury in the sands what the merciless sea will lay bare on the returning tide.

We count the criminal a madman who buries his victims in the house and covers them with cement, as if the earth would be a party to that conspiracy, and not proclaim it. Our Lord said, "There is nothing hid that shall not be revealed." It is better for us to remember our faults now, at once. Why wait until discovery means doom irrevocable? Break the shock of discovery by frankness now and confession on earth. Anticipate the final recollection. If we do not cover our sins, but confess them, there is mercy with Him, and plenteous redemption. That is a wonderful revelation of God to men. But we are told in more places than one in Scripture that there is a sin for which it is useless to pray, a sin which is a spiritual suicide, and which leaves no place for repentance in this world or the next. It is one of the truths given us in order to open the closed spiritual sense. Outside of this sin unto death, the whole message of the Bible is that, if we confess our sins, God is faithful

and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The awakened conscience must urge that sins are scored deep in, as in tablets of glass, and how can forgiveness avail? No power can cut these ugly scores out. Such questions must be asked of necessity by the sinner who has awakened. It is not so much sins as done against God—we cannot hurt Him—but sins done against ourselves. Do you fully realise the marvellous answer to these disquieting fears? The pardon of God in Christ brings the re-creation of the whole nature of man. It means nothing short of making a clean heart. The old nature is absolutely taken away. The deeds done are never forgotten by us, but if we are changed these deeds will meet us, not to condemn us, but to awaken us to praise the astonishing power and grace of the Lord, who has delivered us from the power of sin.

Seek then to remember your sins this day, that you may flee to Jesus, to receive from Him the pardon which brings the transformation of our very nature.

RECEIVING AND GIVING.

By the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse.

Preached at St. James's Hall, July 14th, 1892.

"Freely ye have received; freely give."—Matt. x. 8.

I.—A pitiful Christ. We may be "as orthodox as the devil," as John Wesley says; but unless our religion partakes of this great Divine compassion for men and women, we may be sure that the religion of Jesus is not ours.

II.—Pity must pass through prayer into power. Prayer has its beginning in pity, and its end in service. "Pray ye," is always the prelude to "Go ye."

Then comes the summary and application: "Freely ye

have received; freely give." Let us count up our mercies: the gracious quickening of the Holy Ghost; the forgiveness of our sins; the kindly providence of God; the love and blessedness of home; reason and health; all the blessings of this life. Freely forgive and freely give.

THE LAW OF THE LORD.

By the Right Rev. W. Alexander, D.D.,
Bishop of Derry and Raphoe.

Preached at St. Margaret's, Westminster, July 17th, 1892.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." —Ps. xix. 1, 7.

After the course of so many centuries, why are we still ready to accept the admirable heading of Ps. xix. in the Authorised Version: "The creatures show God's glory, the word His grace"?

Why do we receive the Bible? The startling conclusions which have been arrived at by able and pious men need cause no panic.

One part of the Old Testament unquestionably is a miracle in writing: that which contains prophecy about Christ. Read Isa. lii. and liii., and fix in your minds that it was written between five hundred and forty-nine and five hundred and thirty-eight years before Christ. There you read of the suffering of the ideal Servant of God and of His death. And yet, if He were brought to the dust of death, He is lifted above the stars. Heaven and glory broaden from the plunge of death.

Notice also the unity about the old Testament writings. There is throughout a constantly growing moral light and that movement towards the great ideal which was realised in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Nor is it unreasonable to have an exposition of prophecy given to us by Christ and His Apostles. Men feel that the great writers of the human race are colossal, and they look upon them as they look upon far mountains. They see the distant glory, and yet they know not the way to explore it until some bold hand wrests the key from the hold of the giant.

The living Christ must have a true history, and that history is given us in the Gospels.

The character of the New Testament justifies the Church intellectually in the place she assigns to it. All other literature falls after a certain number of generations. Its vital juices become desiccated. But the figure of Jesus stands out upon the canvas of history grander, nobler, than ever.

In reading the Bible devoutly we keep company with a higher purity and with a nobler life; we commune with Jesus Christ, the living Word of the Father, and purifying influences come insensibly to our hearts; the air is sweetened by holy influences: and each soul whom the Bible thus meets, and who thus meets the Bible, is another trophy for the Bible Yes, "the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."

FAITH.

By the Rev. Professor Marcus Dods, D.D.

Preached at Regent Square Presbyterian Church, July 24th, 1892.

"All men have not faith."—2 Thess. iii. 2.

We must divide men into two great classes:—

I.—Those who have never felt any desire to enter into fellowship with Christ. They have never felt the attractiveness of holiness, nor their own defilement and degradation. They do not understand that only in Christ can the human character receive its full development. Life out of Christ is really life in a cellar—gloomy, restricted, dying life.

These have a superstition that religion is a means of pacifying the powers of the world to come, a kind of sop to Cerberus. The truth is, you need Christ as much for this life as for what is beyond.

II.—Those who have had such desire, but have been stumbled by some difficulty. These difficulties may be some of the following :—

(1) That some preparation for coming to Christ is necessary, but the preparation for salvation is sin.

(2) Waiting for the Spirit; but what God commands us to do, He gives us strength to do.

(3) Counterfeit Christians. Their existence is evidence that genuine Christians exist.

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

By the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse.

Preached at St. James's Hall, August, 1892.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."—Rom. viii. 16.

I.—To whom is this witness of the Spirit given? True religion is the action of the Spirit of God upon our spirits. Religion is not a set of creeds, nor is it a matter of forms of worship. We must be born of the Spirit; that is the beginning of the religious life. Note that the Spirit of God is to be willingly received and submitted to. "As many as are *led*, by the Spirit of God. They are the sons of God," *led*, not driven. There is submission, listening for His voice, walking in His way, waiting upon His will. To such there is given the witness of the Spirit.

II.—What is this witness of the Spirit? Notice the emphatic assurance with which St. Paul speaks in the text. He bids us take it for granted that if we are God's children this witness of the Spirit is ours. Some think of the witness of

the Spirit as a kind of revelation from heaven, a wonderful vision or manifestation, something which lifts us up above others. If anything could fill a man with spiritual conceit, that most deadly of all conceits, surely it lies here. The Holy Spirit witnesses not to our goodness or superiority, but to the love and glory of Jesus, to the greatness and fulness of His salvation, to the infinite loving-kindness of our Father.

There are three principal ways in which God has revealed His truth to the world: (1) by the word spoken directly from God to man; (2) by vision; (3) by the creation of an experience in the soul. In this threefold manner does the Holy Spirit witness to our spirits.

III.—This witness of the Spirit is no less Divine because it moves on the ordinary and natural lines of spiritual influence. There are men and women who by their contact do help to create within us a new experience. Rest, peace, truth, love, hope, are often imparted to us by contact with others. It is in this quiet and natural way for the most part that the witness of the Spirit is given.

Surely the heart cries, How may this blessed Spirit be mine? This gift is ours for the simple asking, by the surrender and submission of the heart to His grace.

WHAT IS MAN?

By the Most Rev. W. D. Maclagan, D.D., Archbishop of York.

Preached at St. Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, August 7th, 1892, before the British Association.

"What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?"—Ps. viii. 4.

This is eminently a question of the day, but it is also a question for all time.

In Holy Scripture the question is asked on three different occasions. It is asked by Job and twice by a Psalmist.

I.—The littleness of man is implied, but the Psalmist goes on to indicate the greatness with which it is associated. He is Divine in his origin and capable of a glorious future, and that future God has in store for him. It is in these unparalleled gifts that man's true greatness lies.

II.—Man's possible dominion. We see some evidence of this power and lordship in the achievements of science and skill in these days. But, on the other hand, every effort after progress is a witness to the incompleteness of man's dominion. On every hand there are barriers which stay the conquering steps of skill and science.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes use of this Psalm to show that the final answer to the Psalmist's question came only at the coming of Jesus Christ. In Him was seen the ideal Man. He had dominion over the works of God; witness His miracles, the tokens of the authority He had received from God.

III.—This question suggests the inquiry, What ought man to be? We are to see in Jesus Christ the true ideal of humanity and to find in His life the pattern of our own. St. Augustine has beautifully said the substance of religion is to imitate Him whom you worship. In this imitation lies the perfectness of our being and the fulness of our joy.

AFRAID TO ENTER THE CLOUD.

By the Rev. Prof. Hislop, M.A.

Preached at Marlborough Road Presbyterian Church, September 4th, 1892.

"While He thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them; and they feared as they entered into the cloud."—Luke ix. 34.

The great vision was going to fade, and Peter, willing to prolong this heaven on earth, had cried, "Let us make three

tabernacles: one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."

Without fear the disciples could address their Master, but the moment they heard the voice out of the cloud they feared and hid their faces in the grass. This cloud is the veil in which the invisible God invests Himself. Everything bore witness to His nearness in this interview. We read that Jesus's raiment became white and glistering, such as no fuller on earth could white it, and in this marvellous light Moses and Elias talked with their Lord. God Himself was near. These disciples behaved just like their forefathers in front of Sinai when they begged Moses to stand between them and God. The disciples too were afraid of the Divine voice. "They feared as they entered into the cloud."

In those words we have portrayed a common tendency of to-day: a shrinking from the deep mysteries and experiences of life and a shrinking from God Himself, who is the deep and awful mystery. To-day we fear as we enter the cloud. It is only the pure and holy souls who can listen to that Divine voice. Moses spoke face to face with God. Jesus was quite at home in the folds of that cloud, for He was always with the Father.

Peter, when a blaze of the supernatural broke over the Galilean waters, cried out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." After twelve months, when a deeper life had awakened in his soul, the same Peter said, "To whom can we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." The first was a cry of fear from his evil nature; the second was a cry of faith.

The deep experiences are the least common. Most of us are too willing to live a trivial life amid trivial things. How many are afraid of the deepest things in life! Look round the world—at its wealth of amusements and pleasures. Here you find no consideration given to the deep things;

it seems an exaggeration of trifles when the easy, cosy life is preferred. It is good for us to ask, "Why do people look so burdened about small things, so vexed about trifles?" Why do the young people shrink back from the religious life as one too lofty for them to live?

They think that they cannot face the storms and stress of an earnest spiritual life. They forget the Scriptures, "Their heart shall fear and be enlarged." Theirs would be a larger freedom and a nobler joy. But if fear keeps them back from entering the cloud, instead of spiritual breadth must come inevitably the wasted, shrivelled spirit. Do not fear to enter the cloud with Christ, where God is.

Christians too sometimes shrink from all mystery, and ask that all truth should be made intelligible to them—God, and life, and death, and immortality. But you may as well say, "Hold the waters in your hand": it cannot be. There are experiences and truths which to make clear is to make nature. Some speak as if revelation had made God perfectly clear and intelligible; some theologians of to-day examine God as they would a complicated machine; some people imagine that, to make God clear and intelligible, all mystery must be taken away. Does mystery hinder love? Did the sons of men love Jesus less for the mystery of His Divinity? Did John, who said, "Where dwellest Thou?" love less when fifty years later he wrote these deep words: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us"? Oh no. Awe and mystery are essential elements in the highest love. People who eliminate mystery from everything are without the deepest reverence. When you see a doctor without reverence, you may see a great physician, but at the same time you see a small man. A being who sees no dignity in man and no sacredness in woman must be a mean soul. Mystery is the element in which all reverent souls live. Nature and life are shrouded in God, the great mystery.

Why should we dread the cloud? for God is there. He is our God, our Saviour, our inspiring Friend, the deep and dear Father of our spirits.

Take any cloud which overshadows you, and you will find God there. How is it that geology and astronomy interest us so much? What need we care about Orion or the Pleiades? They do not increase our wealth. Is it not because we are partakers of God's nature that these have such wonderful fascination for us? At the limits of the finite we come nearer our Father. Place that truth alongside the laws of the natural world. Why should men of science fear to enter into the cloud? They speak of the stars in their courses, of trees and growth, but they stop there, nor burst out into the hymn of praise to God. Behind all force is the movement of a personal Being. All sciences combine their convergent lines in God. Matter belongs to Him, as well as spirit. Around and through all nature and life is a wealth of Divinity.

Turn from nature to human life. How few men look at the world and ask their hearts, "What is all this for?" If I regard the world simply as a place for self-gratification and pleasure and ignore the call to sacrifice and duty, I am turning away and fearing to enter the cloud. But that cannot last. The hour will come when you must enter the cloud. The soul nearing the frontier of life must enter the cloud where Jehovah dwells. How ready we are to flee from God and from ourselves! We shrink from asking ourselves for the true motives of our deeds. Get at the hidden motive. There is real moral power to be got here. We may give a few pence to the poor and think lightly enough of it, and yet the motive which prompts the deed may be God's eternal charity, which entered your heart. Do not be afraid to go to the roots of your lives. By these motives you will be judged. What does the Epistle of

James say? That we shall be judged by "the perfect law of liberty." That means that liberated nature leaps up to the surface and will be judged.

Life must bring us its fresh experiences. Some of the noblest natures shrink from the future's burdens and sorrows. They dread to enter the cloud. But get to God, for He is behind and below all. Get a childlike trust in Him, and the future will have nothing but good for loving souls.

Then there is the shrinking from religious truths, from death and from immortality. Religion is not the surface thing many make it—the forms of worship, etc.—but it is deep converse between our spirits and the Spirit of all flesh. Man's redemption by Jesus Christ is the central great truth of religion. Fear not to enter with Christ the cloud where God is. Let us adore this mysterious Being, and lay our helplessness on His bosom.

SERMON TEXTS FOR THE YEAR.

REV. CANON AINGER, M.A.

The Equalities and Inequalities of Human Lots.—"And all that believed were together, and had all things common." Acts ii. 44, 45. (*Cambridge Review*, Jan. 21st.)

Godliness at Home.—"Then the disciples went away again unto their own homes." John xx. 10. (*Family Churchman*, April 29th.)

RIGHT REV. W. ALEXANDER, D.D., *Bishop of Derry.*

Why do we receive the Bible?—"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." Ps. xix. 1, 7. (*Family Churchman*, July 22nd.)

REV. GEORGE S. BARRETT, B.A.

The Word of Reconciliation.—"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." 2 Cor. v. 19. (*Christian World Pulpit*, May 18th.)

RIGHT REV. A. BARRY, D.D.,
Bishop of Sydney.

Self-assertion.—"Whereinsoever any is bold (I speak foolishly) I am bold also." 2 Cor. xi. 21. (*Family Churchman*, Feb. 26th.)

REV. C. A. BERRY, M.A.

Blighting and Redeeming Vision.—"He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved." Mark x. 22. (*Christian World Pulpit*, April 27th.)

REV. CANON G. BODY, D.D.

Godly Sorrow.—"Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation." 2 Cor. vii. 10. (*Family Churchman*, March 25th.)

VERY REV. G. G. BRADLEY, D.D.,
Dean of Westminster.

The Saints of God.—"After this I beheld, and lo! a great multitude which no man could number of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues stood before the throne and before the Lamb." Rev. vii. 9. (*Family Churchman*, Nov. 6th, 1891.)

God's High Thoughts.—"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Isa. lv. 8, 9. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Jan. 20th.)

Death Swallowed up in Victory.—"He will swallow up death in victory." Isa. xxv. 8. (*Family Churchman*, April 22nd.)

REV. STOPFORD A. BROOKE, LL.D.

Must People Starve? A Plea for Free Night Shelters.—"The poor always ye have with you." John xii. 8. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Dec. 23rd, 1891.)

Our Duty to Working Women.—"We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." Rom. xv. 1. (March 30th.)

The Children's Holiday.—"At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? . . . But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Matt. xviii. 1—6. (June 22nd.)

RIGHT REV. PHILLIPS BROOKS, D.D.,
Bishop of Massachusetts.

The Sacredness of Man's Needs.—"He said unto them, Have ye not read what David did when he was a hungered, and they that were with him: how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?" Matt. xii. 3, 4. (*Christian World Pulpit*, July 13th.)

REV. ARCHIBALD G. BROWN, M.A.

A Great Master Taken.—"And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace." 2 Kings ii. 3. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Feb. 10th.)

Abba.—"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Gal. iv. 6. (*British Weekly*, Aug. 18th.)

RIGHT REV. WILLIAM BOYD CARPENTER, *Bishop of Ripon.*

Disinterested Virtue.—"Do good, and lend, and hope for nothing again." Luke vi. 35. (*Family Churchman*, Feb. 5th; *Christian World Pulpit*, March 5th.)

Man's Discovery of Himself.—An address delivered at the Polytechnic Institution. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Aug. 10th.)

REV. THOMAS CHAMPNESS.

Prophets Wanted.—"And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord." 1 Sam. iii. 20. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Sept. 30th, 1891.)

REV. JOHN CLIFFORD, M.A., D.D.

The Coming Sovereignty of Man.—"Thou didst put all things in subjection under His feet. For in that He subjected all things unto Him, He left nothing that is not subject to Him. But now we see not yet all things subjected to Him. But we behold Him, . . . even Jesus." Heb. ii. 8, 9. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Oct. 14th, 1891.)

The Message of 1891 to Young Men. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Jan. 6th.)

Charles Haddon Spurgeon as a Religious Reformer.—"I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith." 2 Tim. iv. 7. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Feb. 10th.)

The New Theosophy and Christian Teaching. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Feb. 24th.)

The Sea: the Sailor's Sanctuary.—"O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is full of Thy riches. Yonder is the sea, great and wide, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships; there is that leviathan, whom Thou hast formed, to take his pastime therein. These wait all upon Thee, that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season." Ps. civ. 24—27. (*Christian World Pulpit*, May 25th.)

William Carey: the Man and His Message.—"Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations; spare not: lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes. For thou shalt spread abroad on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall possess the nations, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." Isa. liv. 2, 3. (*Christian World Pulpit*, June 1st.)

The Churches and the Future Ministry. (*Christian World Pulpit*, June 29th.)

REV. R. W. DALE, D.D., LL.D.

Watching for Souls: Memorial Sermon for Rev. H. Allon, D.D.—"For they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." Heb. xiii. 17. (*Christian World Pulpit*, April 27th; *British Weekly*, April 28th.)

REV. W. J. DAWSON.

The Blessedness of Womanhood.—"Blessed art thou among women." Luke i. 28. "And they worshipped Him." Matt. ii. 11. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Dec. 23rd, 1891.)

The Democratic Christ.—"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul, neither said any of them that aught of the things that he possessed was his own, but they had all things common," etc. Acts iv. 32—34. (*Christian World Pulpit*, May 11th.)

REV. PROF. MARCUS DODS, D.D.

The Socialism of Paul.—(*Christian World Pulpit*, April 6th.)

What is Religion? (*Christian World Pulpit*, May 18th.)

Faith and Life.—"All men have not faith." 2 Thess. iii. 2. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Aug. 3rd.)

REV. PROF. S. R. DRIVER, D.D.

Scripture.—"Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching." 2 Tim. iii. 16. (*Oxford Magazine*, Nov. 4th, 1891.)

REV. PRINCIPAL J. OSWALD DYKES, D.D.

The Late Dr. Donald Fraser.—"We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle," etc. . . . "We may be accepted of Him." 2 Cor. v. 1—9. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Feb. 24th.)

Jesus in the Midst.—"They crucified Him and two other with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst." John xix. 18. (*British Weekly*, June 2nd.)

Our Suffering Brethren.—"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Matt. xxv. 40. (*Christian World Pulpit*, June 22nd.)

REV. PRINCIPAL T. C. EDWARDS, D.D.

The Life of the Resurrection.—"For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Col. iii. 3. (*British Weekly*, July 28th.)

REV. PREBENDARY EYTON.

The Highest Companionship.—"Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." John xvii. 24. (*Family Churchman*, May 20th.)

REV. PRINCIPAL A. M. FAIRBAIRN, D.D., LL.D.

The Seat and Sources of Authority in Religion. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Sept. 14th, 1891.)

Christ in the First Century and in the Nineteenth.—"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." John i. 17. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Jan. 3rd.)

VEN. ARCHDEACON F. W. FARRAR, D.D., F.R.S.

Thanks Always for all Things.—"Giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." Eph. v. 20. (*Family Churchman*, Oct. 16th, 1891.)

The Third Commandment.—"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." Exod. xx. 7. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Nov. 18th, 1891; *Family Churchman*, Nov. 20th, 1891.)

The Fourth Commandment.—"Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy." Exod. xx. 8. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Nov. 25th, 1891.)

The Sabbath of the Lord thy God.—"Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy." Exod. xx. 8. (*Family Churchman*, Nov. 27th, 1891.)

The Fifth Commandment.—"Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Exod. xx. 12. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Dec. 2nd, 1891.)

The Divine "Afterward."—"But afterward he sent unto them his son." Matt. xxi. 37. (*Family Churchman*, Jan. 1st.)

The Sixth Commandment.—"Thou shalt not kill." Exod. xx. 13. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Jan. 6th.)

Death in the Palace.—"For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces." Jer. ix. 21. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Jan. 20th; *Family Churchman*, Jan. 22nd.)

Knowledge Hereafter.—"What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt understand hereafter." John xiii. 7. (*Family Churchman*, Feb. 12th.)

The Afterward of God.—"What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt understand hereafter." John xiii. 7. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Feb. 17th.)

Christian Legislation and its Hindrances.—"Oh, let the nations rejoice and be glad, for Thou shalt judge the folk righteously, and govern the nations upon earth." Ps. lxvii. 4. (*Family Churchman*, Feb. 19th.)

The Law of Righteousness.—"Take heed unto yourselves lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God." Deut. iv. 23. (*Christian World Pulpit* March 2nd.)

God's Prohibitions.—"Thou shalt not." Exod. xx. 4. (*Family Churchman*, March 4th.)

The Tenth Commandment.—"Thou shalt not covet." Exod. xx. 17. (*Christian World Pulpit*, March 23rd.)

The World for God.—"And He called the twelve together, and He sent them forth to preach the kingdom of God." Luke ix 12. (*Christian World Pulpit*, April 6th.)

Practical Christianity.—"Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?" Ps. xv. 1. (*Christian World Pulpit*, June 1st.)

A Lesson of Ascension Day.—"Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle, and who shall rest on Thy holy hill?" Ps. xv. 1. (*Family Churchman*, June 3rd.)

The Twofold Witness.—"The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Rom. viii. 16. (*Family Churchman*, June 10th.)

A Brave "Nevertheless."—"Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net." Luke v. 5. (*Family Churchman*, July 1st.)

Prayer.—"After this manner pray ye." Matt. vi. 9. (*Christian World Pulpit*, July 6th.)

Our Father which art in Heaven.—"After this manner pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven." Matt. vi. 9. (*Family Churchman*, July 16th; *Christian World Pulpit*, July 13th.)

"Hallowed be Thy Name."—"Hallowed be Thy name." Matt. vi. 9. (*Christian World Pulpit*, July 20th.)

"Thy Kingdom Come."—"Thy kingdom come." Matt. vi. 10. (*Christian World Pulpit*, July 27th; *Family Churchman*, July 29th.)

"Thy Will be Done."—"Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." Matt. vi. 10. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Aug. 10th.)

Our Daily Bread.—"Give us this day our daily bread." Matt. vi. 11. (*Family Churchman*, Aug. 12th; *Christian World Pulpit*, Aug. 17th.)

Our Debts.—"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Matt. vi. 12. (*Family Churchman*, Aug. 19th; *Christian World Pulpit*, Aug. 24th.)

REV. J. MONRO GIBSON, D.D.

The Travellers' Psalm. Ps. xci. (*British Weekly*, Aug. 4th.)

HON. AND REV. E. CARR GLYN, M.A.

The Presence in the Flames.—"He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Dan. iii. 25. (*Family Churchman*, Oct. 23rd, 1891.)

REV. A. GOODRICH, D.D.

Biblical Inspiration. (*Christian World Pulpit*, July 13th.)

REV. CHARLES GORE, M.A.
Principal of Pusey House.

The Nature of Christ's Sacrifice.—"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without

spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!" Heb. ix. 13, 14. (*Family Churchman*, March 18th.)

Spiritual Religion.—"They put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved." Matt. ix. 17. (*Oxford Magazine*, June 15th.)

REV. NEWMAN HALL, D.D.

A Fifty Years' Ministry. (*British Weekly*, July 14th.)

REV. W. H. HARWOOD, M.A.

Delivering up the Kingdom.—"I will say unto him, Father." Luke xv. 18. "Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father." 1 Cor. xv. 24. (*British Weekly*, Nov. 26th, 1891.)

Many, but One.—"But of these who seemed to be somewhat (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me; God accepteth no man's person), for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me, but contrariwise when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter," etc. Gal. ii. 6—10. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Dec. 16th, 1891.)

The Standard of Love.—"God loved the world." John iii. 16. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Feb. 17th.)

Pictures of the Past.—"And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter." Luke xxii. 61; 2 Peter ii. 20. (*British Weekly*, Aug. 11th.)

REV. CANON H. SCOTT HOLLAND.

The Christian Leaven.—"Another parable spake He unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures

of meal, till the whole was leavened." Matt. xiii. 33. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Sept. 21st, 1891.)

Parables.—"And the disciples came, and said unto Him, Why speakest Thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables, because they, seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand." Matt. xiii. 10—13. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Sept. 9th, 1891.)

The Priceless Treasure.—"The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." Matt. xiii. 44. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Sept. 16th, 1891.)

The Pearl of Great Price.—"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it." Matt. xiii. 45. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Sept. 23rd, 1891.)

The Leaven of the Kingdom.—"Another parable spake He unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, and the whole was leavened." Matt. xiii. 33. (*Family Churchman*, Oct. 2nd, 1891.)

The Eternal Purpose.—"According to the eternal purposes which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Eph. iii. 11. (*Family Churchman*, Jan. 8th.)

A Momentous Crisis.—"And when they saw Him they were amazed, and His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. He said unto them, How is it ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" Luke ii. 48, 49. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Jan. 13th.)

Prince and Cardinal.—"But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." Luke xxiv. 37, 38, 39. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Jan. 20th.)

The Victory of Truth.—"Fear them not therefore; for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops." Matt. x. 26, 27. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Jan. 27th.)

Self-discipline.—"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." 1 John iii. 2. (*Christian World Pulpit*, March 9th.)

Our Appointed Place.—"Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following, which also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth Thee? Peter, seeing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what

is that to thee? Follow thou Me." John xxi. 20—22. (*Christian World Pulpit*, May 11th.)

The Transcendental Vision.—"The disciple whom Jesus loved, . . . which also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth Thee?" John xxi. 20. (*Christian World Pulpit*, May 18th.)

London's Spiritual Needs.—"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it, lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish?" Luke xiv. 28—30. (*Christian World Pulpit*, May 25th; *Family Churchman*, May 27th.)

Christ in the Written Record.—"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing, ye might have life through His name." John xx. 30, 31. (*Christian World Pulpit*, June 1st.)

Following Jesus.—"Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a-fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. So when they had dined Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My lambs. And when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, Follow Me." John xxi. 3, 15, 19. (*Christian World Pulpit*, June 8th.)

REV. C. SYLVESTER HORNE, M.A.

Christianity and Education.—"The things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also." 2 Tim. ii. 2. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Nov. 25th, 1891.)

The Living Christ.—"Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" Luke xxiv. 32. (*Christian World Pulpit*, May 11th.)

Our National Crisis.—"Moreover, thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain, and place such over them." Exod. xviii. 21. (*Christian World Pulpit*, June 29th.)

REV. R. F. HORTON, M.A.

The Mystery of the Cross.—"Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness." 1 Peter ii. 24. (*British Weekly*, Sept. 1891.)

The Christian in Business.—"When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Prov. xvi. 7. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Dec. 30th.)

The Citizen's Responsibility. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Jan. 6th.)

What shall the Child be?—"And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be? And the hand of the Lord was with him." Luke i. 66. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Jan. 13th.)

Christ and Literature.—"What thou seest, write in a book." Rev. i. 11. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Jan. 27th.)

Christ and Art. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Feb. 3rd.)

Christ and Amusements.—"Bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but godliness is profitable for all things." 1 Tim. iv. 8. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Feb. 24th.)

Jesus Christ. (*Christian World Pulpit*, April 6th.)

REV. HUGH PRICE HUGHES, M.A.

The Reconciliation of Labour and Capital.—"The labourer is worthy of his hire." Luke x. 7. (*Christian World Pulpit*, April 20th.)

The Use and Abuse of Party Politics.—"Let your forbearance be known unto all men." Phil. iv. 5. (*Christian World Pulpit*, May 25th.)

Luxury.—"Ye have lived delicately on the earth and taken your pleasure; ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter." James v. 5. (*Christian World Pulpit*, June 15th.)

REV. DR. MARSHALL LANG.

Beyond Finding Out.—"Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out." Job xxxvii. 23. (*Christian World Pulpit*, March 2nd.)

RIGHT REV. EDWARD KING, D.D.,
Bishop of Lincoln.

The Unseen Value of our Present Opportunities.—"What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." John xiii. 7. (*Cambridge Review*, Oct. 22nd, 1891.)

REV. CANON W. J. KNOX-LITTLE.

Abiding in Christ.—"Abide in Me, and I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, etc." John xv. 4. (*Church Bells*, March 11th.)

Except.—"Except one is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom." John iii. 5. (*Church Bells*, March 18th.)

Except.—"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Luke xiii. 8. (*Church Bells*, April 1st.)

The Church and Dissent.—"He that is not with Me is against Me." Matt. xii. 30. "They that are not against us are on our part." Mark ix. 40. (*Family Churchman*, April 1st.)

The Faith of the Future.—"They shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord to the corn, and to the wine, and to the oil, and to the young of the flock, and to the herd; and their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all." Jer. xxxi. 12. (*Family Churchman*, April 15th.)

DR. GEORGE MACDONALD.

Salvation from Sin.—"And thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins." Matt. i. 21. (*Christian World Pulpit*, June 22nd.)

The Remission of Sins. (*Christian World Pulpit*, June 29th.)

Jesus in the World.—"Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My

Father's business? And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them." Luke ii. 48—50. (*Christian World Pulpit*, July 6th.)

Jesus and His Fellow-townsmen.—"And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath Day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias; and when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him; and He began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." Luke iv. 16—21. (*Christian World Pulpit*, July 13th.)

The Heirs of Heaven and Earth.—"And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Matt. v. 2, 3, 5. (*Christian World Pulpit*, July 20th.)

Sorrow, the Pledge of Joy.—"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Matt. v. 4. (*Christian World Pulpit*, July 27th.)

God's Family.—"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called

the children of God." Matt. v. 8, 6, 9. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Aug. 3rd.)

The Reward of Obedience.—"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Matt. v. 7, 10—12. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Aug. 10th.)

MOST REV. W. D. MACLAGAN, D.D.,
Archbishop of York.

What is Man?—"What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?" Ps. viii. 4. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Aug. 17th.)

REV. ALEXANDER MACLAREN, D.D.

The Fixed Heart.—"My heart is fixed, O God; my heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise." Ps. lvii. 7. (*Freeman*, Sept. 4th, 1891.)

More Value than Many Sparrows.—"Yea, the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God." Ps. lxxxiv. 3. (Sept. 11th, 1891.)

Deliverance and Salvation through Death.—"And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto His heavenly kingdom, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." 2 Tim. iv. 18. (Sept. 18th, 1891.)

Worthy of your Calling.—"We pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in Him." 2 Thess. i. 11, 12. (Sept. 25th, 1891.)

Everlasting Consolation and Good Hope.—"Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." 2 Thess. ii. 16, 17. (Oct. 2nd, 1891.)

The Heart's Home and Guide.—"The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." 2 Thess. iii. 5. (Oct. 9th, 1891.)

"The Tillage of the Poor."—"Much food is in the tillage of the poor." Prov. xiii. 23. (Oct. 16th, 1891.)

The Lord of Peace and the Peace of the Lord.—"Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always, by all means. The Lord be with you all." 2 Thess. iii. 16. (Oct. 23rd, 1891.)

Every Christian a Preacher.—"For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is me if I preach not the Gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward." 1 Cor. ix. 16, 17. (Oct. 30th, 1891.)

Our Altar.—"We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. . . . By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually." Heb. xiii. 10, 15. (Nov. 6th, 1891.)

The Fountain of Life and the River.—"God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. (Nov. 13th, 1891.)

Our Strong City.—"In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in." Isa. xxvi. 1, 2. (Nov. 20th, 1891.)

The Inhabitant of the Rock.—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Isa. xxvi. 3, 4. (Nov. 27th, 1891.)

The Enthroned Servant Christ.—"We have such a High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary." Heb. viii. 1, 2. (Dec. 4th, 1891.)

The Old House and the New.—"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." 2 Cor. v. 8. (Dec. 11th, 1891.)

The Universal Burden and its Bearer.—"The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Isa. iiii. 6. (Dec. 18th, 1891.)

Isaiah's Vision.—"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." Isa. vi. 1. (Dec. 25th, 1891.)

The Waves of Time.—"The times that went over him." 1 Chron. xxix. 30. (Jan. 1st.)

The Race and the Goal.—"This one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize." Phil. iii. 13, 14. (*Freeman*, Jan. 8th.)

The Sluggard in Harvest.—"The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold: therefore shall he beg in harvest and have nothing." Prov. xx. 4. (Jan. 15th.)

The Devout Heart Defying Death.—"Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Ps. xvi. 9—11. (Jan. 22nd.)

Love Made Visible.—"The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us. . . ." Titus ii. 11, 12. (Jan. 29th.)

The Purpose of the Discipline of Grace.—"That, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Titus ii. 12. (Feb. 5th.)

The Blessed Hope.—"Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Titus ii. 13. (Feb. 12th.)

Christ's Gift to Us and Ours to Him.—"Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus ii. 14. (Feb. 19th.)

The Gospel in Small.—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 Tim. i. 15. (Feb. 26th.)

The Chief of Sinners.—"Of whom I am chief." 1 Tim. i. 15. (March 4th.)

A Test Case.—"Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe." 1 Tim. i. 16. (March 11th.)

Christ's Remonstrances.—"And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Acts xxvi. 14. (March 18th.)

The Glory of the King.—"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." 1 Tim. i. 17. (March 25th.)

The Faithful Heart and the Present God.—"I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." Ps. xvi. 8. (April 1st.)

The Guarantee in God for Guidance from God.—"Good and upright is the Lord; therefore will He teach sinners in the way. The meek will He guide in judgment; and the meek will He teach His way." Ps. xxv. 8, 9. (April 8th.)

Whose Image and Superscription?—"Whose image and superscription hath it?" Luke xx. 24. (April 15th.)

The Resurrection as a Foundation Fact of the Gospel.—"I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received: how that Christ died for our sins

according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4. (April 22nd.)

The Two Guests.—"His anger endureth but a moment; in His favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Ps. xxx. 5. (April 29th.)

Simplicity towards Christ.—"I fear lest by any means your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." 2 Cor. xi. 3. (May 6th.)

The Gift and the Giver.—"Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that saith unto thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." John iv. 10. (May 13th.)

Christ's Finished and Unfinished Work.—"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach until the day in which He was taken up." Acts i. 1, 2. "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding him." Acts xxviii. 30, 31. (May 20th.)

Hid in Light.—"Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man; Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." Ps. xxxi. 20. (May 27th.)

Melted by Kindness.—"And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." Luke xix. 5. (June 3rd.)

Pentecost.—"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing, mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts ii. 2—4. (June 10th.)

Rhoda.—"A damsel . . . named Rhoda." Acts xii. 13. (June 17th.)

The Servant and the Slaves.—"Thy servant David . . ." "Thy holy Servant Jesus . . ." "Thy servants." Acts iv. 25, 27, 29. (June 24th.)

The Dismissal of Judas.—"Then said Jesus unto Judas, That thou doest, do quickly." John xiii. 27. (July 1st.)

The Heavenly Christ's First Promise to the Victors.—"That they may have right to the tree of life." Rev. xxii. 14. (July 8th.)

Christ at the Door.—"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Rev. iii. 20. (July 15th.)

Pilate Washing his Hands.—"Pilate . . . took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it." Matt. xxvii. 24. (July 22nd.)

Unbelieving Belief.—"And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." Mark ix. 24. (July 29th.)

Form and Power.—"Having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." 2 Tim. iii. 5. (Aug. 5th.)

The Power of Diligence.—"Giving all diligence, add to your faith." 2 Pet. i. 5. (Aug. 12th.)

One Saying from Three Men.—"The wicked hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved." Ps. x. 6. "Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." Ps. xvi. 8. "And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved." Ps. xxx. 6. (Aug. 19th.)

The Martyrdom of James.—"Herod killed James the brother of John with the sword." Acts xii. 2. (Aug. 26th.)

REV. F. B. MEYER, B.A.

God's Plan, and our Part in It.—"In every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him." Acts x. 35. (*Christian World Pulpit*, May 4th.)

The Pentecostal Gift.—"That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Gal. iii. 14. (*British Weekly*, July 21st.)

REV. CANON NEWBOLT.

The Valley of Decision.—"Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision, for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision." Joel iii. 14. (*Family Churchman*, Dec. 18th, 1891.)

Sin and Suffering.—"A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Isa. liii. 3. (*Family Churchman*, April 8th.)

"Thou shalt not steal."—"Thou shalt not steal." Exod. xx. 15. (*Family Churchman*, Aug. 26th.)

REV. JOSEPH PARKER, D.D.

Special Blessedness.—"Thy blessing is upon Thy people." Ps. iii. 8. (*Christian Commonwealth*, Sept. 3rd, 1891.)

One More.—"One plague more." Exod. xi. 1. (Sept. 10th.)

Contrasted Translations. Job v. 6, 7; xiii. 12, 27; xviii. 15; xxxi. 35; xl. 23. (Sept. 17th.)

Christ's Three Assaults. Mark iii. 8; John v. 40. (Sept. 24th.)

Unofficial Titles.—"Man of God." 1 Tim. vi. 11. "My son." 2 Tim. ii. 1, etc. (Oct. 1st.)

Mixed Multitudes.—"And a mixed multitude went up also with them, and flocks and herds, even very much cattle." Exod. xii. 38. (Oct. 8th.)

Religious Attitudes.—"Jesus stooped" (John viii.); "To sleep" (Ps. iv. 8); "Clutching" (1 Tim. vi. 12); "Standing" (Eph. vi.). (Oct. 15th.)

Divine Looks.—Gen. xviii. 16; Exod. iv. 31; 1 Sam. xvi. 7; Job xiii. 27; Ps. xiv. 2; Luke xii. 61. (Oct. 22nd.)

Sons of Eli, Sons of Belial. 1 Sam. ii. 12. (Oct. 29th.)

Ezekiel's Visions. Ezek. xii. (Nov. 5th.)

False Prophesying. Ezek. xiii. (Nov. 12th.)

Heart Idols. Ezek. xiv. 1—11. (Nov. 19th.)

Fruitless and Useless. Ezek. xv. (Nov. 26th.)

Prophecy in Parable. Ezek. xvii. (Dec. 3rd.)

What Christ came for.—"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 Tim. i. 15. (Dec. 10th.)

The Prophet and the People. Ezek. xxxiii. 30—33. (Dec. 17th.)

Not as Yet.—"Ye are not as yet come to the rest." Deut. xii. 9. (Dec. 24th.)

Quick Trading.—"And straightway he that had received the five talents went and traded with them." Matt. xxv. 16. (Dec. 31st.)

How to be Somebody out of Nobody.—"Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." Gal. iii. 7. (Jan. 7th, 1892.)

Plus Gladness.—"Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." Ps. iv. 7. (Jan. 14th.)

God's Care of His Altar.—"Thus saith the Lord God: No stranger uncircumcised in heart nor uncircumcised in flesh shall enter into My sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel." Ezek. xliv. 9. (Jan. 21st.)

Curious Things in Life. Ezek. xlviii. (Jan. 28th.)

Different Views of the Same Thing.—"And said unto Him, Hearest Thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?" Matt. xxi. 16. (Feb. 4th.)

Spurgeon Memorial Sermon. (Feb. 11th.)

Great Dreams. Dan. xi. 1—30. (Feb. 18th.)

Great Images. Dan. ii. 31—49. (Feb. 25th.)

Why the Image? Dan. iii. 1—5. (March 3rd.)

Apostate Cities. Ezek. xxvi.—xxviii. (March 10th.)

Figs—Good and Bad. Jer. xxiv. (March 17th.)

The Life-giving River.—"Everything shall live whither the river cometh." Ezek. xlvii. 9. (March 24th.)

Chambers of Imagery.—"And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up." Ezek. viii. 11. (March 31st.)

Joy after Desolation. (April 7th.)

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream. Dan. iv. 1—18. (April 14th.)

The Reservations of God. Dan. xii. 8—13. (April 21st.)

Spiritual Times and Seasons. Zech. i. 1—9. (April 28th.)

The Environment of Worship.—"Come hither, and hear the words of the Lord your God." Josh. iii. 9. (May 5th.)

Living Faculties.—"The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them." Prov. xx. 12. (May 12th.)

Zechariah's Visions. Zech. v. (May 19th.)

Zech. vii.—viii. (May 26th.)

A Divinely Constituted City.—"Again the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury. Thus saith the Lord: I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth, and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain. Thus saith the Lord of hosts: There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." Zech. viii. 1—5. (June 2nd.)

God-hated Things.—"These are things that I hate, saith the Lord." Zech. viii. 17. (June 9th.)

Personal Responsibility.—"These are the things that ye shall do: Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates." Zech. viii. 16. "The burden of the word of the Lord in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof, when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the Lord." Zech. ix. 1. (June 16th.)

The Coming of the King. Zech. ix. 12. (June 23rd.)

God's Dealings with His People. Zech. xi.—xiii. 1. (June 30th.)

False Idols. Zech. xiii. 2—xiv. 20, 21. (July 7th.)

The Priests Challenged. Mal. i. 6—13. (July 14th.)

Prophets and Priests. Mal. iii. (Sept. 8th.)

Divine Looks. Gen. xviii. 16; Exod. iv. 31; 1 Sam. xvi. 7; Job xiii. 27; Ps. xiv. 2; Luke xxii. 61. (Oct. 22nd.)

Sons of Eli, Sons of Belial.—"The sons of Eli were sons of Belial." 1 Sam. ii. 12. (Oct. 29th.)

REV. ARTHUR T. PIERSON, D.D.

The Blessed Dead.—"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." Rev. xiv. 13. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Feb. 10th.)

The Signs of the Times.—"Can ye not discern the signs of the times?" Matt. xvi. 3. (*Christian World Pulpit*, May 4th.)

Strengthening the Stakes.—"Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." Isa. liv. 2, 3. (*Christian World Pulpit*, June 8th.)

REV. JOHN PULSFORD, D.D.

The Lights and Shadows of Nature.—"The living God, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things therein, . . . left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." Acts xiv. 15—17. (*Christian World Pulpit*, May 18th.)

The Inexcusableness and Unreason of Unbelief.—"That which may be known of God is manifest among them; for God hath showed it to them. For the invisible things of God . . . are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; *so that they are without excuse.*" Rom. i. 19, 20. (*Christian World Pulpit*, July 20th.)

REV. J. GUINNESS ROGERS, B.A.

The Christian Minister: Preacher, not Priest.—"Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel." 1 Cor. i. 17. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Nov. 18th, 1891.)

The Christian Minister: Pastor, not Priest.—"With freedom did God set us free; stand fast, therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage." Gal. v. 1. (Nov. 25th, 1891.)

The Christian Minister: the Perils of Priestism.—"Neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away." 1 Peter v. 3, 4. (Dec. 9th, 1891.)

The Christian Minister: the Preacher's Theme.—"Make disciples of all nations." Matt. xxviii. 19. (Dec. 16th, 1891.)

The Death-roll of the Week.—"And all Israel shall mourn for him." 1 Kings xiv. 13. (Jan. 20th, 1892.)

Christian Service and its Reward.—"Well done, . . . good and faithful servant." Matt. xxv. 21. (Feb. 3rd.)

The Gospel according to Paul.—"I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received: how that Christ died for your sins according to the Scriptures." 1 Cor. xv. 3. (April 20th.)

The Christian Citizen.—"Paul said, I am a Roman born." Acts xxii. 29. (June 29th.)

The Spirit of Christian Liberty.—"And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. But Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not, for he that is not against you is for you," etc. Luke ix. 49—56. (July 20th.)

REV. PROF. W. SANDAY, M.A., D.D.

Christian Attainment.—"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended," etc. Phil. iii. 13, 14. (*Cambridge Review*, June 2nd.)

REV. PRINCIPAL D. W. SIMON.

Living Christ.—"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Phil. i. 21. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Aug. 31st.)

VEN. ARCHDEACON SINCLAIR.

The Propagation of the Gospel of Peace.—"He shall speak peace unto the heathen, and His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." Zech. ix. 10. (*Family Churchman*, Dec. 4th, 1891.)

The Relations of the Church with Nonconformity.—"Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren; be pitiful; be courteous, not returning evil for evil, but contrariwise blessing." 1 Peter iii. 8, 9. (*Family Churchman*, March 4th; *Christian World Pulpit*, March 9th.)

Schism.—"I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that there be no schisms amongst you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." 1 Cor. i. 10. (Aug. 3rd.)

REV. PROF. G. A. SMITH, M.A.

The Long-suffering of God. (*British Weekly*, Nov. 19th, 1891.)

The Light of the World.—"Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening." Ps. civ. 23. "While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may become the children of light." John xii. 36. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Jan. 26th.)

Profanity in the Home.—"Any profane person like Esau." Heb. xii. 16. (Aug. 17th.)

REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

(*From the "Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit."*)

Lydia, the First European Convert.—"And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." Acts xvi. 14 (No. 2222.)

Abraham's Trial: a Lesson for Believers.—"And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Behold, here I am." Gen. xxii. 1. (No. 2223.)

"If Thou canst"; "If thou canst."—"If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Mark ix. 22, 23. (No. 2224.)

A Clarion Call to Saints and Sinners.—"Arise ye, and depart: for this is not your rest; because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction." Micah ii. 10. (No. 2225.)

"Lay Hold on Eternal Life."—"Lay hold on eternal life." 1 Tim. vi. 12. (No. 2226.)

Wanted!—Volunteers.—"And next him was Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself unto the Lord, and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valour." 2 Chron. xvii. 16. (No. 2227.)

The Law's Failure and Fulfilment.—"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. viii. 3, 4. (No. 2228.)

God's Glorious and Everlasting Name.—"To make Himself an everlasting name; . . . to make Thyself a glorious name." Isa. lxiii. 12, 14. (No. 2229.)

Loved and Laved.—"Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Rev. i. 5, 6. (No. 2230.)

An Urgent Request for an Immediate Answer.—"And now, if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me: that I may turn to the right hand or to the left." Gen. xxiv. 49. (No. 2231.)

Christ's Motive and Ours.—"For your sakes." 2 Cor. viii. 9. "For His sake." Phil. i. 29. (No. 2232.)

Both Sides of the Shield.—"Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out; fight with Amalek: to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand." Exod. xvii. 8, 9. (No. 2233.)

The Best Donation.—"And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." 2 Cor. viii. 5. (No. 2234.)

A Warrant for your Apprehension.—"The word of the Lord is against you." Zeph. ii. 5. (No. 2235.)

Prodigal Love for the Prodigal Son.—"And kissed him." Luke xv. 20. (No. 2236.)

Gratitude for Deliverance from the Grave.—"I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me sore, but He hath not

given me over unto death." Ps. cxviii. 17, 18. (No. 2237.)

"Thou art now the Blessed of the Lord."—"Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Gen. xxvi. 29. (No. 2238.)

Is God in the Camp?—"And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore." 1 Sam. iv. 7. (No. 2239.)

A Challenge and a Shield.—"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." Rom. viii. 34. (No. 2240.)

A Stanza of Deliverance.—"He brought them forth also with silver and gold; and there was not one feeble person among their tribes." Ps. cv. 37. (No. 2241.)

God's Will about the Future.—"Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain, whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings; all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James iv. 13—17. (No. 2242.)

His Own Funeral Sermon.—"For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep." Acts xiii. 36. (No. 2243.)

Members of Christ.—"For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Eph. v. 30. (No. 2244.)

"**Living, Loving, Lasting Union.**"—"For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Eph. v. 30. (No. 2245.)

"**Come from the Four Winds, O Breath.**"—"Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." Ezek. xxxvii. 9. (No. 2246.)

Praise for the Gift of Gifts.—"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." 2 Cor. ix. 15. (No. 2247.)

Sad Fasts Changed to Glad Feasts.—"Thus saith the Lord of hosts: The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace." Zech. viii. 19. (No. 2248.)

"**Even Now.**"—"Even now." John xi. 22. (No. 2249.)

Words to Rest On.—"And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah, king of Judah." 2 Chron. xxxii. 8. (No. 2250.)

Our Compassionate High Priest.—"Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." Heb. v. 2. (No. 2251.)

The Unknown Giver and the Misused Gifts.—"For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take away My corn in the time thereof and My wine in the season thereof, and will recover My wool and My flax." Hos. ii. 8, 9. (No. 2252.)

The Perseverance of Faith.—"Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." Matt. xv. 28. (No. 2253.)

The Two Guards, Praying and Watching.—"Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them." Neh. iv. 9. (No. 2254.)

God Justified, though Man Believes Not.—"For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar, as it is written, That Thou mightest be justified in Thy sayings, and mightest overcome when Thou art judged." Rom. iii. 3, 4. (No. 2255.)

Daniel's Band.—"O Daniel, a man greatly beloved." Dan. x. 11. (No. 2256.)

Inexcusable Irreverence and Ingratitude.—"They are without excuse, because that when they knew God they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful." Rom. i. 20, 21. (No. 2257.)

Where is the Lord?—"Then He remembered the days of old, Moses, and His people, saying, Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? where is He that put His holy Spirit within him; that led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting name: that led them through the deep, as a horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest; so didst Thou lead Thy people, to make Thyself a glorious name." Isa. lxiii. 11—14. (No. 2258.)

The Simplicity and Sublimity of Salvation.—"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 11—13. (No. 2259.)

Christ's Hospital.—"He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Ps. cxlvii. 3. (No. 2260.)

One Worker Preparing for Another.—"Now, behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the Lord a hundred thousand talents of gold and a thousand thousand talents of silver, and of brass and iron without weight; for it is in abundance: timber also and stone have I prepared; and thou mayest add thereto." 1 Chron. xxii. 14. (No. 2261.)

Christ's Curate in Decapolis.—"And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts. And when He was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." Mark v. 17—19. (No. 2262.)

Christ's Plea for Ignorant Sinners.—"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke xxiii. 34. (No. 2263.)

Sowing in the Wind; Reaping under Clouds.—"He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." Eccles. xi. 4. (No. 2264.)

Harvest Joy.—"Thou hast multiplied the nation and increased the joy; they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." Isa. ix. 3. (No. 2265.)

Blessing for Blessing.—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Eph. i. 3, 4. (No. 2266.)

Life from the Dead.—"And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Eph. ii. 1. (No. 2267.)

A Question for Communicants.—"What mean ye by this service?" Exod. xii. 26. (No. 2268.)

Impotence and Omnipotence.—"And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered Him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked." John v. 5—9. (No. 2269.)

Two "I Wills" in Isa. xli.—"I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." Isa. xli. 18. (No. 2270.)

Alone, yet not Alone.—"Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now

come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." John xvi. 31, 32. (No. 2271.)

REV. JAMES STALKER, D.D.

The Christian Citizen.—"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ." Phil. i. 27. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Nov. 11th, 1891.)

The Everlasting Gospel.—"The everlasting Gospel." Rev. xiv. 6. (*Christian World Pulpit*, June 22nd.)

REV. T. B. STEPHENSON, D.D., LL.D.

A Monumental Church.—"And when they came unto the borders of Jordan, that are in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see to." Josh. xxii. 10. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Nov. 11th, 1891.)

The Christian as Citizen.—"Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea." Acts xxii. 27. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Feb. 3rd.)

REV. E. S. TALBOT, D.D.

Nature and Faith.—"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it." Eccles. i. 4—8. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Aug. 24th.)

RIGHT REV. F. TEMPLE, D.D.,
Bishop of London.

Temptation.—"Lead us not into temptation." Matt. vi. 13. (*Family Churchman*, Nov. 13th, 1891.)

VERY REV. C. J. VAUGHAN, D.D.

In the Name of the Lord Jesus.—"And whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." Col. iii. 17. (*Family Churchman*, Oct. 9th, 1891.)

Our Sickness and our Sorrows.—"Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." Isa. liii. 4. (*Family Churchman*, Jan. 29th.)

Nicodemus.—"There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews." John iii. 1. (*Family Churchman*, June 17th.)

RIGHT REV. BROOKE FOSS WESTCOTT,
Bishop of Durham.

Good Tidings to the Poor.—"The poor have good tidings preached to them." Matt. xi. 5. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Dec. 23rd, 1891.)

DR. ALEXANDER WHYTE.

John's Prologue.—"That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." John i. 9. (*Christian World Pulpit*, Dec. 9th, 1891.)

RIGHT REV. ERNEST R. WILBERFORCE, D.D.,
Bishop of Newcastle.

Work ; Faith ; Patience.—"Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Heb. vi. 12. (*Family Churchman*, May 6th.)

ANECDOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

FROM

SERMONS OF THE YEAR.

THE OTHER PLAGUE.

EXOD. xi. 1.—"One plague more."

ARE we waiting for the one plague more? God has it; there is always a severer plague in reserve. We have never tested God's severity to the utmost. Every plague that has come upon us has been, as we thought, the very worst that could possibly be inflicted, and yet the next wholly superseded it, and by some keener agony caused the former pain to be forgotten. We cannot exhaust infinity. We have suffered much; we have not yet suffered perdition. There is no telling the range of God's hell. It needs all the words man has ever fabricated for the expression of the largest idea in order to set forth the very initial conception of God's power of punishment. "Go, sin no more, lest a worse thing befall." The man said, What can there be worse? Leave that with God. How can I suffer more than I have already endured? God will find the capacity for suffering if thou dost multiply thy transgressions, oh vain and foolish heart. Never imagine that you have ever seen either the best or the worst of God. This statement is equally true on both sides of the Divine character and the Divine administration. The angels are always saying, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now."—REV. JOSEPH PARKER, D.D.

SOUL CONTROVERSY.

Exod. xii. 38.—"And a mixed multitude went up also."

We have felt the controversy in the soul; Paul felt it when he said that when he would do good evil was present with him; he found a law in his members: now he would be heavenly, then he was earthly; now he would be valiant, and immediately he was dastardly in soul; so then he says, "The things I would do I cannot do, and the things I would not do, these I do: God help me; God cut this dead carcase from my life!" He was a mixed multitude. So are we. It is the same way with our thoughts. We are not always impious. Sometimes even the unbeliever feels as though he could believe if one beam could be added to the light which already showers its glory upon his life. Sometimes the believer feels as if he had been misled, as if he were following some aerial sprite, some shadowy spectral nothing; sometimes he has one foot out of the church in the attitude of a man who means to leave the altar altogether, and ere the sun sets he is back again right in the middle of the sanctuary, saying that nothing shall detach him from the noblest memories and the purest inspirations of his life. At what point is he to be judged? God will judge him at his best. God accepts our prayers in their bloom. Sometimes we pray ourselves out of prayer; God has ceased to listen when we reach that poor conclusion. When the soul for one brief moment realises its true quality and speaks the one true syllable that touches the ear of heaven, God's Amen follows that one real cry of felt necessity.—Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D.

OATHS.

Exod. xx. 5.—"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain."

Oaths were adopted as a protection to the sacred cause of justice, and the soul must be indeed seared and callous that

can appeal to the Almighty to gain credence for a lie. The heathen felt this as strongly as we can do. Few stories in the old Greek historian are more full of awe than that which tells us how Glaucus, the son of Epicides, having had a treasure entrusted to him, was tempted when it was reclaimed to swear that he had never received it; but before being guilty of this perjured villainy he consulted the oracle, and the oracle gave him this ironical advice—and as Micaiah bade Ahab go up to Ramoth-gilead and prosper, for the Lord should deliver it into his hand, so the oracle said—"Glaucus, son of Epicides, for this moment it is more gainful so to break an oath and embezzle the treasure: swear, for even those who keep their oaths have to die; but"—for the terrific "but" came after the ironical permission—"but there is a nameless child of Oath; it has no hands, it has no feet, yet, vehement, it overtaketh, it clutcheth thee, it shall destroy all thy generation and all thy house, and it is better hereafter with the race of him who keeps his oath." Terrified by the dread menace, Glaucus begged forgiveness of the gods, hurried back to Sparta, and handed to the owners the treasure which he had been tempted to embezzle. It was too late. The guilty and shameful thought of his heart was not forgiven him. He had purposed to take in vain the Divine name, and before the third generation his whole race had been rent up from Sparta root and branch.—Ven. Archdeacon F. W. Farrar, D.D.

HONOURING OF PARENTS.

Exod. xx. 7.—"Honour thy father and thy mother."

How often has the thought of a mother been present even at the closing moments of life! When the young and gallant boy Prince Conradin of Hohenstauffen, last of his

race, was dragged to the scaffold, at the age of sixteen, undaunted to the last he flung the gage of defiance among the multitude, but as he bowed his fair young face over the block he murmured, "Oh, my mother, how deep will be thy sorrow at the news of this day." And when Sir John Moore lay dying on that disastrous field of Corunna, the name of his mother was the last upon his lips. The truest men have never blushed to give public proof of this filial devotion. No record of the late James Garfield, the murdered President of the United States, won him warmer sympathy than the manly kiss which he gave to his aged mother before the assembled multitudes on the day of his supremest elevation. Why was one Spartan worth ten other Greeks upon a battle-field? It was because Spartan boys were trained in parental obedience. When the Spartan mother gave her boy his shield, with the words, "Bring back this, or come back upon it," her word made him invincible. When the Spartan boy complained that his sword was too short, and the mother said, "Then add a stride to it," she armed him in triple steel. Obedient sons make unflinching patriots; and it was because honour to parents meant honour to their country that those three hundred Spartans stood against the vast host of Persia at Thermopylæ, and when they lay buried under the darts of their enemy Simonides wrote their epitaph:—

"Go, tell the Spartans, thou that passest by,
That here, obedient to their laws, we lie."

VEN. ARCHDEACON F. W. FARRAR, D.D.

KEEPING THE SABBATH.

EXOD. xx. 8.—"Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy."

THERE are many false ways of keeping Sunday. Let not ours be the Puritanic Sunday of gloomy strictness, for

"this is the day the Lord hath made; let us rejoice, and be glad in it." Let not ours be the Parisian Sunday of frivolity and pleasure-seeking, for man is a spirit and a child of eternity. Let not ours be the Pharisaic Sunday of petty rules and restrictions, for God has bidden us to stand fast in the liberty wherewith He has made us free. Do not ask any small shivering questions, such as "May I do this little thing?" and "Must I not do that other little thing?" Follow your own consciences, and that will be enough. When Bishop Neale was asked, in the days of James I., whether ladies on Sunday might employ their hands in knotting—something like what we call knitting—he deigned to give no other reply than "They may (k)not," purposely leaving the answer ambiguous, as the only answer which such a petty question deserved; and Bishop Hacket, the biographer of the Lord Keeper Williams, was content with the wise, beautiful, manly rule, "Serve God and be cheerful." The Sunday may be to us, as to the Israelites, a deliverance from base servitude. The soul of every one of us is liable to many agitations, regrets, envies, ambitions, bitter disappointments, ungovernable desires, deep despondency. These make the soul like one of those Kaffir huts, which are so full of idols that the owner has no room to move about in them. Among these ugly and multitudinous idols there can be no room for Christ, and Sunday may be a constant help to us to prevent their accumulation and their dominance. It may save us from the fell tyranny of a worldly routine. What a tendency there is to absorb ourselves in some base impulse such as the heaping up of money by business! "He was born a man," said a French epitaph, "and he died a grocer"; in other words, he had merged the sacredness of his manhood in the pursuit of his trade.—Ven. Archdeacon F. W. Farrar, D.D.

REVERENCE FOR HUMAN LIFE.

EXOD. xx. 1.—"Thou shalt not kill."

THE primary aim, of course, of the Commandments is to inculcate reverence for human life. Man is, or rather should be, a sacred thing to man. But for the tendency of the selfishness which makes every bad man his own idol, each man's life would be thus sacred in each man's eyes. It is Christianity that has made it so. The Romans would assemble by myriads in the amphitheatre to see men hew each other to pieces for their amusement. In China, in Dahomey, in all savage and all corrupted countries, human life is utterly cheap; in Christian countries it is infinitely precious. When the body of poor George Ebbens was cut and dashed to pieces on the rocks above Niagara, tens of thousands of spectators assembled on the shores of the river to help him if possible, and one universal sob shook the heart of the whole mighty multitude when that poor unknown boy missed his leap, and was swept over the rushing falls. Only the lowest nations, only the basest or the most pernicious men, care not who perishes so their interests be fed. Was there ever in human story a more despicable picture—unless it be a mere allegory—than that of the prophet Jonah wishing himself dead because of the wretched gourd, yet exceedingly displeased and very angry because, to save a man's miserable reputation, God did not destroy Nineveh, with its hundred and twenty thousand inhabitants? Was there ever a more wicked speech uttered than that of Napoleon I. when Prince Metternich told him that his plan would cost the lives of one hundred thousand men, and he haughtily replied, "A hundred thousand men! What are a hundred thousand men to me"? Metternich walked to the window and flung it open, exclaiming with indignation, "Sire, let all Europe hear that atrocious

sentiment." True, the Hebrew prophet and the modern conqueror were men, not monsters; they only show what gigantic proportions our selfishness may assume.—VEN. ARCHDEACON F. W. FARRAR, D.D.

RELIGION AND MORALITY.

DEUT. iv. 23.—"Take heed lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord."

BRIEF then as they are, the Commandments, and with them the whole scope and range, the origin and the sum-total, of man's duty, are summed up in two monosyllables: "Love"; "Serve." The Jews split the Ten Commandments into six hundred and thirteen positive and negative precepts and prohibitions. We can reduce them to one. St. Paul reduced them to the one word "Believe"; St. John reduced them to the one word "Love." Thank God for their simplicity; thank God that the wayfaring man, yea and even fools, need not err therein. Thank God that, while men may, if they like, devote their whole souls to small observances, doctrinal technicalities, and petty heresy-huntings, that which God requires as alone necessary for any one of us is righteousness, and righteousness depends on love. A young Gentile went to the great doctor Shammai, and said to him, "I will become a Jew if you will teach me the whole law while I stand on one leg," and the angry Rabbi drove him out of the house with blows. But when he went with the same words to the rival of Shammai, the sweet and noble Hillel, Hillel gently answered, "That is easy, my son: never do to any one what you would not like him to do to you. That is the whole law; all the rest is commentary and fringe." The Gentile was converted, but the Rabbi was wrong. Christ when He was asked by the young ruler, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" did not thus dissever the golden rule from

its force and sanction; He did not divorce the second table from the first: He said, "Keep the commandments; love God with all thy heart"—that is the first table; "and thy neighbour as thyself"—that is the second. He knew that man cannot love God his Father unless he loves man his brother, and that he cannot love man the brother aright or at all unless he loves his Father God. Religion is dead if it is severed from morality; morality perishes if it is divorced from religion. Righteousness without God-fearing is a rootless flower stuck in the garden of a child. The mighty rivers which fertilise the plains of India, with all their countless effluents, have their force far up in the aerial ocean among the lofty Himalayas. Cut them off from this source in the high mountains, and they will vanish utterly. Even so it is with the moral law, which alone gives fruitfulness to any human life: dissever it from its fountain in the Divine sanctions, and it evaporates in the scorching fury of evil passions. In this sense we interpret the remark of Josephus that, whereas in other religions virtue was made a part of religion, in God's covenant religion was but a part of virtue. In truth neither is a part of the other; they are inseparably the same.—Ven. Archdeacon F. W. Farrar, D.D.

THE MIGHT OF WEAKNESS.

1 Sam. v. 4.—"Only the stump of Dagon was left to him."

In France there is a magnificent cartoon by Paul Chenavard, representing what may be termed the palingenesis of human society. The great picture is divided into two horizontal zones. In the upper one we have a flaring, noisy, triumphant procession of imperial Cæsar. There are lictors, generals, banners, spoils, prisoners, elephants, and eagles, and, indeed, everything necessary to convey the impression

of insolent and unchallenged power. But the lower zone suggests at once the idea of silence, obscurity, patience, and suffering. It discloses the primitive Christians at prayer in the catacombs, which they have dug to serve them both as chapel and grave beneath the throne of the Emperor. The contrast is complete, and, like all masterpieces of art, tells its own story. It teaches that the pagan civilisation of Rome when at the height of its strength and splendour, and when entirely oblivious to danger, was being surely though steadily undermined, and was inevitably doomed to give place to a new order born of a new and despised creed. What adds significance to this conception is the historical fact that the patricians, the philosophers, and even the plebs of the Eternal City held in contempt a religion that had the Cross for an altar and an alleged malefactor for its hero. But notwithstanding this supercilious self-confidence, Christianity, weak, unattractive, and unostentatious, ultimately triumphs, and haughty heathenism lies tumbled and ruined at its feet. Analogous to this triumph of the feeble over the mighty, of the scorned over the scoffer, and of the captive over the victor, is the singular event that occurred in the days of Samuel, and that furnishes my curious text. —Rev. G. C. Lorimer, D.D.

STRENGTH AND BEAUTY.

1 Kings vii. 22.—"And upon the top of the pillars was lily-work."

Strength and beauty—is it not by these that God makes the world what it is to us? The rugged rock affords a home for the soft mosses and the plumes of ferns as if these things paid for board and lodging by their adorning. The trees with roots thrust deep into the earth, with thick black branches, stretching into heaven—how are they decked with the leaves, and how are they now gay with blossoms

and now rich with fruit. Strength and beauty—is it not the very picture and the very perfection of the home? Here comes the man stained and soiled by his day's toil; and here is she who keeps home sweet and clean, and makes his heart bless her as he sets foot within the place. Strength and beauty—yet more complete, if possible, as the toiling father and the busy mother bend over the little one that looks and laughs its music at them. So God blesses the world with strength and beauty. Have you noticed how closely allied were Tubal-cain and Jubal? The father of blacksmiths and the father of musicians were half-brothers, and always have been, and it may well be that the smithy was the birthplace of music. The lad stood and watched the brawny arm that struck the iron, and noticed that the sound it made was according to its length, and again he watched the bellows which woke the fire from its dull glare to a blaze; and then he thought it out, and arranged the sounds in order, and became the father of them that do handle the harp, with its varied length of strings, and the organ. So came together strength and beauty. We want the brawny smith who shapes the iron, but we want also the music that lightens labour, and gladdens life, and soothes sorrow, and gives utterance to things that are too subtle and too ethereal for words. Let us thank God for this: that in the temple, and in the world, and in the lowliest home, and in the workshop, He ever finds room for these two: strength and beauty. Then notice, further, that strength must find its completion in beauty—lily-work on the top of the pillars. Strength must be crowned with beauty. If it be true that religion is contemptible without strength, yet it is equally true that strength is often repulsive without beauty. Truth without love may bluster and scold, so that many a poor soul has been driven from delusion to despair. Righteousness, sturdy righteousness, may thunder

and hurl its lightnings all inconsiderate of circumstances and temptation, and so become unrighteousness for lack of pity. Justice without sympathy is without eyes, and becomes unjust because it cannot see the proportion of things. Our strength must be crowned with beauty. There are some people who affect to despise beauty, and consider it a weakness. "Give me a brass pillar," say they, "solid and substantial. I don't want any nonsensical lily-work about the top of it." Now such people may do much harm in the world, more harm than good. How perfectly were the two characters blended in Jesus Christ: strength and beauty. How sublime, how fearless, how unmoved, was He, though all the forces of earth and hell came up against Him in mad fury, although the awful cry, "Crucify Him!" was rung from a thousand voices, although heaven itself was darkened, and He hung forsaken of all; yet what beauty of pity filled His soul in His prayer for His murderers, in His promise to the thief beside Him, and in the tender care for His mother. What gentleness and what unutterable compassion is His! To be conformed to His image is to be strong as the pillar of God, and yet to be crowned with the beauty of God. How mighty, how almost Godlike in its might, is a bit of sentiment; how it can soften, subdue, transform. Some time ago I was having a wedding—a man and a woman who should have been man and wife long before. He had become a Christian, and insisted on marriage; but to her evidently it was a thing irksome and half resented. I could read her thoughts. A wedding indeed! and the face was filled with scorn, everything so squalid and wretched; and she drew up her skirt and thrust out a broken boot. She had long ago dreamed of a wedding—a thing bright and beautiful and blessed—but now, and here, and thus! It was hideous. Then one of the Sisters stepped forward and put into her hand a little

bouquet of flowers. Instantly her face changed. She looked at them with a start. It was as if something of the purity and sweetness of those maiden days had come back to her. She smelt them, and a new life entered into her. She took them tenderly and set them in her bosom. Then she drew herself up and smoothed her dress, and looked another woman. The touch of beauty had come into her life that redeemed it all, the lily-work on the top of the pillar. The look, the tone, the manner, do give the truth its charm, and win for it an entrance where a blustering way would have the door shut in its face. How often do men forget that God's hatred of evil and His indignation against it is *the wrath of the Lamb*, where grief and pity are yet supreme. Far back in the imperishable memory of my childhood is a sermon on the judgment, such as have frightened most of us in our early days, I doubt not. To me, at any rate, the scene was awfully, cruelly graphic—far more graphic and terrible than the Lord Jesus made it. To those troubled hosts about the great white throne came the voice of the Judge. It was harsh, pitiless, triumphant: "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." How far away from such a one did I try to get that night, thinking myself happy if only I could have found a world where He was not. Now it chanced that week there was a case at the assizes that had stirred the deepest interest of the country: one poor girl was tried for the murder of a baby that somebody had left with her. My father had some business at the court, and when he came home he told me all the story: how the judge had put on the black cap, and how he could scarcely speak the sentence, his voice choked with emotion; how he sank back when it was spoken and buried his face in his hands, and how as the warders came to take her away he said, "Touch her gently, poor thing, poor thing." Then I

seemed to hear the sermon all over again. I knew then how Jesus Christ looked and spake those words. We mistake truth for ourselves, and fail to teach it to others when the lily-work is wanting from the top of the pillars.—Rev. Mark Guy Pearse.

GOLDEN MEMORIES OF MR. SPURGEON.

2 Kings ii. 5.—"Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day?"

I was just about ten years of age when first his name began to be bruited abroad. I remember, though only a child then, my father speaking about a young man whom he had heard at Southwark, and I thought how I should like to hear him, too. Then, at the age of thirteen, I was in the habit of running from Clapham Park to the Surrey Music Hall. How marvellously those sermons live! I was only a lad of thirteen, but I find the sermons I heard then are indelibly impressed on my mind now. Turning to the old volumes of 1857, I find that the very words he uttered are the words that come back to my memory. When he preached he burned his subject into you. One sermon I shall never forget. It was when I was between thirteen and fourteen, but it had to do with all my future course. His text was, "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." As I sat in the gallery listening to his denunciation of instability, I remember as a lad forming this resolution: "Whatever else, then, I will not be unstable." I saw as he was preaching that want of purpose, want of definite consecration at least to something, was the secret of all weakness. Then that sermon, "Let us not sleep as do others"! Oh, how it rings now in my ears! There may be some of you who were present that morning; if so, you will never forget when, having described London as plague-

stricken, with its streets quiet, with the grass growing in Cheapside, he suddenly called out, "Bring out your dead, bring out your dead"; how he made us hear the rumble of the wheels of the death-cart going through the city, and in a moment showed us that there was a Physician that had an infallible cure for that plague. Never can I forget the look of awful anger on his face as he said, "Wake, man, wake; they are dying on every hand." Sitting behind him in the Surrey Music Hall, I heard a discourse, that has had a world-wide reputation as a soul-winning sermon, on the text, "Compel them to come in." I remember how I struggled against the influence of that sermon. Sitting by the column in the gallery to the right, I hear again that sermon, "God be merciful to me a sinner," a sermon that swept through the place, and when he closed he simply breathed his text as a prayer, and I can hear again the thunder of the great "Amen" that rolled through the place as every one involuntarily uttered the word; and I remember with what surprise, as a lad, I heard that he had prepared an elaborate sermon for that morning, but the Lord took it all away from him, and as he rode up to the place he felt the only thing he could preach upon was "God be merciful to me a sinner."—Rev. A. G. Brown.

POTTERS AND HEDGERS.

1 Chron. iv. 23.—"There they dwelt with the king for his work."

The Master wants lowly workers to do lowly work. The king's hedgers were to build the king's hedges, and the king's potters were to make the king's pots, and the king's gardeners were to see to the king's gardens. See what room the Lord makes for lowly workers. In paradise itself He gave the first man the post of gardener. When He Himself comes into the world it is as the little Babe wrapped

in the swaddling-clothes, and when He comes to be a Man He is known as the carpenter. He seems to choose the lowly things of earth for His service. His disciples are fishermen; He bids them consider the fowls of the air and the flowers of the fields as if He made these His duly appointed preachers. It is the grain of mustard-seed that is the emblem of the kingdom of heaven, and the leaven hidden in the meal. When the disciples were quarrelling as to which of them should be greatest He takes a child and sets him in their midst, the little boy with great wondering eyes looking into the Master's face, and the disciples bending around him, the Master's arm about the lad as if it were His own: "Fear not!" If they would be greatest they must become as this little child, and thus should they enter into the kingdom of heaven. The Lord does not want splendid workers so much as He wants simple and loving souls that are altogether given up to Him. It is the song of the little children that He would not suffer to be silenced; and it was the mite of the poor widow that He commended more than all the golden gifts of the rich. Our Master has a wonderful eye for the service of the little and the lowly.

Now, dear simple and lowly souls, here is room for you. You who cannot do any great thing can find a place in the King's service. The maidservant, the lad at school, the man in the workshop, the young man and young woman in the house of business—the King of heaven wants you. Get the letters stamped on you "H.M.S."—on His Majesty's Service. Remember that you carry the glory and honour of the King. If I am only the King's hedger let me build a hedge fit for the King. If I am the King's gardener I will seek to have the flowers at their sweetest and their best. I can grow love for Him, and sturdy trust, and glad obedience; and these are His favourite flowers. Let me set my-

self to please the King. Oh, to end this useless fretting that we are so little and that we have no gifts! Why, what a mercy it is that we are not all geniuses! If we could all preach sermons who would there be to hear them? If we could all do splendid things who would scrub the floor and boil the kettle and mind the baby? What a dreadful world to live in—a world of geniuses! Come, dear lowly ones, let this be our consolation: "My Lord, I cannot serve Thee with such splendid service as I would, but I will make up for it in the constancy of my love; and that which I can do for Thee I will with all my heart."—Rev. Mark Guy Pearse.

THE RECORD OF TIME.

1 Chron. xxix. 30.—"The times that went over him."

The transitory "times that went over" Israel's king are all recorded imperishably on the pages here. And so, though condensed into narrow space, the record of the fleeting moments lives for ever. And "the books shall be opened, and men shall be judged according to their works." We are writing an imperishable record by our fleeting deeds. Half a dozen pages carry all the story of that stormy life of Israel's king. It takes a thousand rose-trees to make a vial full of essence of roses. The record and issues of life will be condensed into small compass, but the essence of it is eternal. We shall find it again, and have to drink as we have brewed when we get yonder. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." There is a time to "sow," and that is the present life; "and there is a time to gather the fruits" of our sowing, and that is the time when times have ended, and eternity is here.—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

GOD IN EVERYTHING.

2 CHRON. xxv. 9.—"But Amaziah said, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? And the man of God answered, The Lord is able to give thee much more than this."

AMAZIAH represents you. What is to be done? God recognises the difficulty, He recognised the difficulty of Amaziah, and He sent His servant to point him upward. He said, "God is able to cast down, and God is able to lift up, and God is able to defeat and give the victory." When our first missionaries went to India, Dr. Cope died on the voyage. Some letters of introduction to English gentlemen in India had been written. When his friends arrived, they went on shore and told how Dr. Cope had died, and been buried in the deep sea. As they knew nothing of the language of India, they asked advice, and the advice given was, "Take the first vessel that sails for England, and go home again." One young man of the party said, "That is out of the question. I came here to preach the Gospel, and, God helping me, I mean to do it." They said, "If you bring God into the matter, that alters it altogether." Bring God into your pleasure, and that will alter it altogether; bring God into your worldly business, and that will alter it altogether.—REV. C. GARRETT.

TROUBLE.

JOB v. 6, 7.—"Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground, yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward."

THE Revised Version reads, "For affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; but" (instead of "yet")—"but man is born unto

trouble, as the sparks fly upward." The reasoner will have no atheism; he will not have a government by chance: whether he was right or wrong, he proceeded upon a distinct basis and policy in his construction of events and in his interpretation of the universe. When he saw affliction he said, "This is not a weed; it is a flower planted by the Head Gardener." When he saw trouble he did not see something that had merely happened, a curious mischance, an event off colour; he said, "Even this trouble cometh down from heaven; it is a black angel, it is not pleasant in visage, the voice is hoarse and unmusical: but trouble is a minister of God, an agent of heaven." "Man is born unto trouble"—how? "As"—It would seem as if for once the emphasis were to be laid upon the least word in the whole sentence. "Yet man is born unto trouble, as"—It will be difficult to represent this music in type; the emphasis is not to run thus: "Yet man is born unto trouble": these words are to be spoken trippingly upon the tongue until we come to the descriptive and defining word —"Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." The poor little sparks come down again, because they cease to be sparks and are turned into cold ashes, but all light, if it be but a sparklet, leaps up to the sun, wants to go home. "Man is born unto trouble, as"—A great law and a simple law operates in nature. This may be the way to get him home again; this may be the only possible way of bringing him to solar centres and solar rest. "Born unto trouble," according to a law. But law means measurement; licence never means definiteness. Licence is loose-ended; no man can tell where licence ends, because it runs out after all its lustful desires and purposes without control, without reason, without moral measurement. But if man is born unto trouble, "as"—that is to say, according to a law and an example given in nature—then trouble is under

control, it is measured, defined, weighed in scales of gold, and not a tear too many is allotted to any eye.—Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D.

PATIENCE.

Job xiii. 12.—"Your remembrances are like unto ashes, your bodies to bodies of clay."

The patient man was the bitterest speaker in all history. Probably this may be so of spiritual and intellectual necessity. Who can tell what patience is when it is soured? By the bitterness of the vinegar infer the sweetness of the wine. But what does Job mean when he says, "Your remembrances are like unto ashes, your bodies to bodies of clay"? He means nothing. Here is an effort to express the mind of Job, and it failed. Men of course have read the verse ten thousand times, and accepted it simply because it is in the Bible. The Bible asks no such favour at our hands; the Bible says, Stop, understand me. What am I talking about? What is my purpose? Don't think you are paying any reverence to me by simply reading words that are within two bindings. I want you to get at my reason, my spirit, my Divine genius. The Revisers put it thus: "Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes; your defences are defences of clay." Away with them! They pelt poor Job with apophthegms, neat little maxims, which are hardly ever true; and as the shower falls upon his aching head he says—for his tongue was razor-like—"Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes": there is nothing in them. You have been searching through all the ashpits of ancient history for words to throw at me, and I tell you that I receive them all as but so many dead ashes, cold and useless. And "your defences"—your defences of God; your defences of yourselves; your defences of what you call truth—"are defences of clay," and you are clay-heads yourselves—miserable comforters are ye all, and

I will listen no more to you. Go away! This was patience, and this is patience. Patience must be honest; patience must be angry; patience is not a faculty or attribute that has been drugged into sleep: it is the most tremendous energy of the soul.—Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D.

THE DECREES OF GOD.

Job xxxvii. 23. -"Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out."

I have thought that it might be for our profit to linger over this acknowledged hardness, to ponder the phrase the inscrutable decrees of Providence. Nobody will doubt the fact of which that phrase makes mention. This old Arab sheikh, or whoever he was, long, long centuries ago confessed it: "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out," and psalmist, and hymnist, and preacher, and essayist, and philosopher, and men and women of all sorts and conditions have confessed it times and ways without number. One of the questions in our Shorter Catechism is, "What are the decrees of God?" The best answer ever given, better answer far than the one in the Catechism, was that once given by a Scotch girl: "He kens best Himsel'." I cannot offer any explanation of what is inexplicable. God would not be God if I could find Him out. If I could find Him out He would be a finite being, caused and conditioned like myself. When I say He is infinite, uncaused, unconditioned, the Almighty, I concede at once that He is beyond my comprehension. No searching of Him, however deep, however exhaustive, could disclose, can disclose, the everlasting secret. All that man can do is to relieve some pressure, to help the weak, to recall the wavering, to strengthen a right faith in One who may be high as heaven or deep as hell, but whom we believe in always and through all as love.—Rev. Marshall Lang, D.D.

THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE.

Job xl. 23.—"Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not; he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth."

What does that mean? It means nothing. The Revisers set forth the meaning very clearly: "Behold, if a river overflow he trembleth not; he is confident though Jordan swell up to his mouth." That is just what men should be who put their trust in God. "Behold, if a river overflow, he trembleth not." He says, It is all in the hand of God; the river is overflowing my meadows and carrying away my hay harvest. I do not fear or fret; it is not my harvest; it is God's. "He is confident though Jordan swell up to his mouth." He does not begin to fear when he sees Jordan, but when Jordan doubles itself, swells, expands, rises, floods over, and comes up to his very neck, and then to his chin, and then to his very mouth, he says, I shall still be saved. Over the brimming river he breathes his assurance of triumph through the power of God. — Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D.

GOD'S BLESSING.

Ps. iii. 8.—"Thy blessing is upon Thy people."

Do not suppose that you can arrange for the Divine blessing. Do not accept the sophism that the Divine blessing can be used as an element in speculation or investment. The Divine blessing comes as the wheat comes; it comes after ripping up the earth, sowing it, preparing it, and after a long process, it may be, of waiting: so it comes not by itself, but as the final mark in a series, as the blessing upon a process. When the golden wheat swings in the autumnal wind and throws back the autumnal sunlight, all the seasons of the year seem to culminate in that one motion. Winter is there because winter gave the earth its hospitality of sleep; spring

is there, and summer is there, and autumn is there: in that golden wheat the four seasons of the year hold harmonious festival. Some have not begun yet to do anything. When the lists are made out our names will not be upon them. The first shall be last, and the last shall be first. The child that gave away its only penny will be at the very tip-top of the list, and the brewer whose personalty was sworn at six hundred and fifty thousand pounds—where will he be? He gave his fifty, his five hundred; where will he be in the assize? Last!—Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D.

THE SPIRITUAL MAN HAS EVERYTHING.

Ps. iv. 6, 7.—"Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart."

You young hearers should commit to memory Cowper's beautiful poem in which he concludes with this word: that he can "lift an unpresumptuous eye to heaven and say, My Father made them all!" Fill your souls with that poetry, and you cannot be paupers; seize that idea, hold it, personalise it, and make it your own, and you will not know when care comes; if care tap at your door he will presently say to himself in his own ghostly way, I should have gone elsewhere: this is not the place I meant to come to. You cannot banish care by a mere calculation, by so-called but really empty prudence; you can only banish all your enemies by entertaining with boundless hospitality the very Spirit of God. God made nothing for Himself; He made everything for us: all the green grass is ours, and all the blue sky. Little child, you can fix upon any acre of blue sky you please and have it; now where will you have your sky-garden? Look well round, and tell me, and we will call it yours, and ten thousand other children may have the very same sky-lot, and you will not crowd one another.

The sky is elastic and accommodating, and belongs to every one. Sometimes the poorest man has seemed to own most of that boundless realm. If you are in Christ all things are yours; life is, death is, things high, things low: all things are yours, so that you may get out of them all their highest suggestion, all their tenderest comfort. Have a great universe; to have that, have a great Father. You cannot have the universe unless you have the Creator.—Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D.

PROSPERITY.

Ps. xxx. 6.—"And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved."

Long peace rusts the cannon, and is apt to make it unfit for war. Our lack of imagination and our present sense of comfort and well-being tend to make us fancy that we shall go on for ever in the quiet jog-trot of settled life without any very great calamities or changes. But there was once a village at the bottom of the crater of Vesuvius, and great trees, that had grown undisturbed there for a hundred years, and green pastures, and happy homes, and flocks; and then one day a rumble, and a rush, and what became of the village? It went up in smoke-clouds. The quiescence of the volcano is no sign of its extinction. And as surely as we live, so sure is it that there will come a "to-morrow" to us all which shall *not* "be as this day." No man has any right to calculate upon anything beyond the present moment.—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

THE GUIDANCE OF GOD.

Ps. lxxiii. 24.—"Thou wilt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory."

Follow the guidance, and at once, for delay is fatal. Like a man walking behind a guide across some morass, set your feet in the prints of the Master's and keep close at His

heels, and then you will be safe. And so, dear friends, if we want to have anchorage for our love, let us set our love on God, who alone is worthy of it, and who alone of all its objects will neither fail us nor change. If we would have the temper which lifts us above the ills of life and enables us to keep our course unaffected by them all, as the gentle moon moves with the same silent, equable pace through piled masses of cloud and clear stretches of sky, we must attain submission through love, and gain unreluctant endurance and steadfast wills from the example and source of both, the gentle and strong Christ. If we would have our hearts calm, we must let Him guide them, sway them, curb their vagrancies, stimulate their desires, and satisfy the desires which He has stimulated. We must abandon self, and say, "Lord, I cannot guide myself. Do Thou direct my wandering feet." The prayer will not be in vain. He will guide us with His eye, and that directing of our hearts will issue in experiences of love and patience, "whose very sweetness yieldeth proof that they were born for immortality." The Guide and the road foreshadow the goal. The only natural end to which such a path can lead and such guidance point is a heaven of perfect love, where patience has done its perfect work, and is called for no more. The experience of present direction strengthens the hope of future perfection. So we may take for our own the triumphant confidence of the Psalmist and embrace the nearest and the remotest future in one calm vision of faith that "Thou wilt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory."—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

INDIFFERENCE.

Ps. lxxxiv. 3.—"Yea, the sparrow hath found a house."

Sparrows and swallows have very small brains. They build their nests, and they do not know whose altars they

are flitting around. They pursue the insects on the wing, and they twitter their little songs; and they do not understand how all their busy, glancing, brief, trivial life is being lived beneath the shadow of the cherubim, and all but in the presence of the veiled God of the Shekinah. There are plenty of people who live like that. We are all tempted to build our nests where we may lay our young, or dispose of ourselves or our treasures in the very sanctuary of God, with blind, crass indifference to the Presence in which we move. The Father's house has many mansions, and wherever we go we are in God's temple. Alas! some of us have no more sense of the sanctities around us and no more consciousness of the Divine eye that looks down upon us than if we were so many feathered sparrows flitting about the altar.—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

THE HARVEST.

Prov. xx. 4.—"He shall beg in harvest and have nothing."

This life as a whole is to the future life as the ploughing time is to the harvest, and there are awful words in Scripture which seem to point in the same direction in reference to the irrevocable and irreversible issue of neglected opportunities on earth, as this proverb does in regard to the ploughing and harvests of this life. I dare not conceal what seems to me the New Testament confirmation and deepening of the solemn words of our text, "He shall beg in harvest and have nothing," by the Master's words, "Many shall say to Me in that day, Lord! Lord! and I will say, I never knew you." The five virgins who rubbed their sleepy eyes and asked for oil when the master was at hand got none, and when they besought, "Lord! Lord! open to us," all the answer was, "Too late! too late! ye cannot enter now." Now, while it is called day, harden not your hearts.—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

OUR RELIGIOUS NATURE.

PROV. xx. 12.—"The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made both of them."

As certainly as we have bodily faculties that have meanings, missions, and issues, as the hand was meant to handle, and not to see or to hear, as the foot was meant to travel, as the ear hears but does not see, as the eye sees but does not hear, as there is a balance and relationship between the bodily and the external, so we have what is called a religious nature. We know the meaning of reason; we know the meaning of faith; we know the meaning of passionate and wordless yearning. You have this religious nature; you yearn for completeness; you say you will have rest to-morrow. What are you going to do with your religious nature? If I were to tell you to seal your ear you would know that I was violating the law of common-sense: were I to tell you to let down your eyelid and never lift it more, exclude the universe and pay no further heed to it, you would resent the suggestion as a fool's seduction: and yet what are we doing with our religious nature, with all those uppermost spiritual faculties that would lay hold of the true metaphysic and the true *spiritual* of the universe? What are we doing with our religious nature? Sirs, we can *starve* it!—REV. JOSEPH PARKER, D.D.

THE VISION OF GOD.

ISA. vi. 8.—"Here am I; send me."

So this vision of God is the foundation of all nobleness of life. How small sorrows and cares will look when we can see the throne and Him that sits upon it! How glorious earth will seem when through it all we see the flashing and glowing of the manifested glory of God!

How blessed the empty places in our lives and hearts will be if we see God filling them! When Stanley's men struggled out of the thick forest where for months they had been toiling, and never seen the sky but "through the close covert of innumerous boughs," they were glad for the ampler air and the wider view. God makes clearings in our lives that through them we may get a more distant prospect, and see a wider stretch of sky than before.—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

ANSWERS TO PRAYER.

Isa. xli. 17.—"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none."

"Well," says some one, "I had once a great wish in my heart, and I asked God for it again and again. For weeks, for months, I kept asking Him for it, and it did not come. So I gave up praying altogether." Now let us look at that for a moment. The late Dr. Parsons, of New York, had a tea-caddy which he inherited from his father, who was also a spiritual preacher. Its history was curious. A husband and father, reduced to abject poverty, set out on a Sabbath morning to drown himself, and so escape the agony of looking at starving wife and children. A crowd was entering the Tottenham Court Road Chapel, London, and the man somehow was drawn along with the crowd. Mr. Parsons preached from Isa. xli. 17: "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them." He appealed to his hearers needing temporal and spiritual blessings: "Have you put the God of Jacob to the test?" "No," thought the desperate man, "I have not." He went back, told his wife, joined in prayer, and all day seemingly in vain; but next

morning temporary aid came, with directions as to work, which he found, did faithfully, and rose to comfort and notable prosperity. He offered a large gift to the good preacher, but it was declined. He sent the tea-caddy as a memento of his gratitude, which he felt could not be refused. Now the meaning of the counsel is, Go on asking what you need, and put the God of Jacob to the test. See whether He will not fulfil His promise.—Rev. John Hall, D.D., LL.D., New York.

THE BURDEN.

Isa. liii. 6.—"And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

The evil that we do, going forth from us as deed, comes back upon us as guilt. Flung up, as it were, into the heavens, it falls back again on the head of the man that cast it. And so my text speaks of a recoil of the evil. "The Lord hath made to fall upon" some one "the iniquity" that had been audaciously cast up in the face of the heavens, as in scorn. "If 'twere done when 'tis done 'twere well 'twere done quickly," but seeing that it only *begins* when "'tis *done*," it is an awful thing to commit the smallest evil. The recoil of the gun bruises blue the shoulder of the man that fires it; and all our evil deeds, according to the old proverb about curses, "come home to roost." There is guilt, and there is habit, and there is the uneasy, or worse, the silent and seared, conscience, and there is the disturbance of the relation to God, and there is the flight of peace from the heart, and there is the onward look that says, "If there is a future it is a future of retribution, and every transgression and disobedience shall receive its *just* recompense of reward." Is not that a burden for us to carry, the weight of evil pressing upon us in its consequences: guilt, disturbance, irritated or paralysed conscience, and the foreboding that if

we get what we deserve we shall get but a bitter weird? "Bread eaten in secret is pleasant," but it turns to gravel that breaks the teeth of the eater. And so, dear brother and friend, we are all staggering under this burden. We forget it, we deny it, we will not look over our shoulders to see how big it is, we try to find refuge and rest in all manner of palliations and excesses, but there the fact remains, and those of you who are least aware of the weight that is pressing upon you are the most weighed down by it. The creatures that live at the bottom of the doleful sea, fathoms deeper than plummet has ever sounded, have to bear a pressure upon their frames all inconceivable by the men that walk upon the surface of the earth. And the deeper a man goes in the dark ocean of wrong-doing and wrong-being, the heavier the weight of the compressed atmosphere above him, crushing him in. And yet, like those creatures that crawl on the slime miles down in the dreary sea, where no light has come, he knows not the weight that rests upon him, and never has dreamed of how blessed it is to walk in the lighter air, with the sun shining above him. There are some of you, grovelling down at the bottom of the ocean, to whom the liberty and illumination, the lightness and lightsomeness of the pure life which is possible, would seem miraculous.—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

HEART-DISEASE.

Jer. xvii. 9.—"The heart is deceitful above all things."

The place of the disease indicates its fatal character: "in their heart." This is *heart-disease*. Men almost whisper when they indicate that some friend is suffering from disease of the heart; there is hopelessness in the tone; great allowance should be made, they say, for a man who is suffering from heart-disease; he must not be startled or excited or suddenly

pounced upon; his wishes must be gratified: they must as far as possible even be anticipated; and any little impatience he may show must be looked at charitably, because he is suffering from heart-disease. The talk is humane; the considerateness is full of affection; the conditions imposed are suggested by reason. Is there not a higher disease of the heart? Is it true that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked? Is it true that the heart delights in concealment? Is it true that the heart has offered a bribe to secrecy to hold its lips for ever? Is not every man, did he but know it, suffering from heart-disease? —Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D.

THE LIVING RIVER.

Ezek. xlvii. 9.—"Everything shall live whithersoever the river shall come."

How many people have heard, from a missionary point of view, of New Guinea? It was a heathen country, given over to all manner of debasement and corruption and foulness and cruelty. To-day it blossoms as the rose. Why? Because the Gospel has been instituted there, preached there, received there; and men who once would have devoured you are now inquiring about the very highest possibilities of thought and destiny. In the name of justice, find the cause of this transformation, and acknowledge it. Did a band of purely scientific persons go over there and colonise? Not they. Was New Guinea transformed by a little brigade of botanists? Never. Who went first? The man who always goes first: the Christian. Then crowds follow, and the crowds that follow are apt to think they made the highway on which they travel. Not a stone of it did they lay. Have you heard of Madagascar and the islands of the Pacific, or any missionary field at all? The

missionary has gone and found it given over to all manner of evil, all manner of cruelty, and he has left it a comparative paradise. The question ought to be asked, What did it? and the answer is, The river came; the river brought life with it. It may seem to be a simple thing to say, but it contains a whole philosophy of civilisation, that the river does not come to the city: the city comes to the river. What a gracious thing it was for the Thames to come to London! The Thames never did come to London; the Thames made London. We as a city are built on the Thames. Rome stands on the Tiber. How kind of Rome to receive the Tiber! How very condescending of London to make way for the Thames to roll through almost her very centre! The river did not come. Where water is men go. Build a magnificent palace anywhere, and then find out at the end there is no water in the neighbourhood; now you may sell your palace to any fool who will buy it. What is wanting? The river. Has a river anything to do with building? Everything. No water, no life; no river, no home. Yet how many persons act as if they thought London had brought the river, and act as if they thought that they were the creditors of religion, and not debtors to it. The truth is, men do not go back to facts; they do not force themselves back to first principles and starting-points; they accept civilisation as it is without tracing it to its fount and origin. Has the river brought life to your house? Wherever it has come it has brought life, has tamed ferocious nature, has made the feeble strong, has made the sick at heart hopeful and glad. Has the river come into your soul? If so, you are a new man. You live now; your thought is quicker, more sensitive, larger, tenderer; now you think about other people, and when you put on all your wrappages you wonder if you could not find room for poor shivering poverty under one corner of your gaiety; when you make a

feast you are at all events now disposed to give the leavings to the poor: by-and-by you will reverse the arrangement and let the poor sit down first. "Everything shall live whither the river cometh"—honesty and beauty, and all holy purpose, and all generous thought and effort; everything shall live: the domestic animals on your hearthstone, your horse in the stable, your man in the loft. When you are converted the poorest beggar that knocks at your door will know it.—Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D.

CHRIST THE REVEALER.

Dan. ii. 22.—"He revealeth the deep and secret things."

All men are not prisoners who are in gaol. Sometimes the turnkey is more a prisoner than the man whom he has locked up, and oftentimes the judge is more a captive than the man whom he may with unconscious injustice have consigned to a prison undeserved. Consider what you are and what you have intellectually, spiritually, educationally. Give a boy a good education, and you give him a fortune, which he cannot spend or throw away, and which will come usefully to his aid in far-away places and far-away times; give a child a rich Christian education, a real, sensible, healthy, wise training, store the memory with Zion's own psalms and minstrelsy and with the words of Jesus, small as dewdrops but immeasurable as suns, and somewhere the child may become even in poverty and expatriation and shame a prophet, a teacher, one who can let fall upon the darkening mystery the illumination of heaven. This is the attitude of Christianity to-day and every day. It tells men the meaning of their nightmare and trouble and sorrow, and it often has to put before the distracted imagination the very thing that was dreamed. But Jesus can do all this. He answered every one who came to Him earnestly and urgently.

It was only to speculation that He was so stonily dumb and deaf; it was only curiosity that He smote and turned away with a weal on its brazen face. When men came broken-hearted, with eyes blind with tears, He told them all they could receive of wisdom and gospel and tenderness. The disciples sometimes failed, but Jesus Christ never. The disciples were represented in some feeble degree by the magicians and astrologers, the necromancers and the sooth-sayers of Babylon, but Jesus Christ was partially represented by the true interpreter, the completely equipped and qualified prophet. Said one, "I brought my son to Thy disciples that they would heal him, but they could not." Said Christ, "Bring him hither," and the diseased son went home a free man, strong, and full of gratitude. Said the disciples, "We cannot feed this great multitude, for we have only a few loaves and a few fishes." Said Christ, "Make them sit down; now," said He, "bring what you have got." What hands He had! He brake, and brake, and gave the disciples a busy time of it. There is a touch that multiplies; there is a smile rich as the dawn of a summer day; there is a voice every tone of which has in it a martial inspiration or a tender benediction. That voice is Christ's.—Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D.

THE TEMPLE.

Matt. iii. 12.—"Whose fan is in His hand."

Jesus Himself, with the same breath in which once He called the Temple His Father's house, called it a den of thieves. His expulsion from it of the buyers and sellers was the first waft of the fan with which He was come to purge His Father's dominions. Nothing could ever cleanse that house; His fanning rose to a tempest, and swept it out of His Father's world.—Dr. G. Macdonald.

PRAYER.

MATT. vi. 7.—"In praying use not vain repetitions."

"IN praying," He said, "use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do." The Hindoo fakir will stand all day long repeating over and over again the name of his deity; the Buddhist thinks that there is salvation in the endless repetition of his magic formula; the Mussulman will interlard even his wickedest speech with endless parentheses of "God is patient, God is great"; the ignorant Romanist repeats his *aves* and his *paters*, dropping a bead with every *pater noster*. God bears compassionately with our fooleries, but when it is this, what our Lord calls mere stuttering on the one hand, and on the other the stumbling out of empty words, prayer at last becomes at this rate degraded into a mere mechanism. But even repeated prayers may, indeed, have their place. St. Augustine tells us that he once spent all night long in the single prayer, "Noverim te Domine, noverim me" - "O Lord, may I know Thee: may I know myself!" Such a prayer does not break our Lord's command, so long as it continues to be intense and fervent. Our Lord sometimes spent whole nights in prayer.—VEN. ARCHDEACON F. W. FARRAR, D.D.

FATHER.

MATT. vi. 9.—"Our Father which art in heaven."

THE Father is with him all the time, but it may be long ere the child knows himself in His arms. His heart may be long troubled as well as his outer life. The dank mists of doubtful thought may close around his way, and hide from him the Light of the world. Cold winds from the desert of foiled endeavour may sorely buffet and for a time baffle his hope; but every now and then the blue pledge of

a great sky will break through the clouds over his head; and a faint aurora will walk his darkest East.—Dr. George Macdonald.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

Matt. vi. 9.—"Hallowed be Thy name."

It is told of one of the best saints of the Middle Ages, St. Thomas of Aquinas, that when Christ appeared to him and said, "You have written well of Me, Thomas; what reward do you desire?" "Non aliam mercedem nisi te, Domine"—"No other reward save Thyself, O Lord"—was the rapt reply. Ah, how the days become nothing to him to whom God is all! St. Teresa once dreamt that she saw an angel who had in one hand a curtain and in the other a shell of water, and the angel said that he had come to hide heaven and to quench the fire of hell, that men might learn to love God without any thought of reward or punishment, but simply for Himself alone. Certainly our prayers are worthless unless the one which habitually takes precedence of all of them is this: "Teach me to do the thing which pleaseth Thee, for Thou art my God; let Thy loving Spirit lead me into the land of righteousness," and that prayer is but another form of "Hallowed be Thy name."—Ven. Archdeacon F. W. Farrar, D.D.

"ACCORDING TO YOUR FAITH."

Matt. ix. 29.—"According to your faith be it unto you."

The measure of our belief is the measure of our blessing. The wider you open the door, the more angels will crowd into it, with their white wings and their calm faces. The bore of the pipe determines the amount of water that flows into the cistern. Every man gets in the measure in which he desires. Though a tremulous hand may hold out a cup

into which Jesus Christ will not refuse to pour the wine of the kingdom, yet the tremulous hand will spill much of the blessing; and he that would have the full enjoyment of the mercies promised and possible must "ask in faith, nothing wavering." The sensitive paper which records the hours of sunshine in a day has great gaps upon its line of light answering to the times when clouds have obscured the sun; and the communication of blessings from God is intermittent, if there be intermittency of faith. If you desire an unbroken line of mercy, joy, and peace, keep up an unbroken continuity of trustful confidence.—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

THE SENDER AND THE MISSION.

Matt. ix. 38.—"Send forth labourers."

Brethren, the secret of our lives, if they are at all to be worthy and noble, must be this: the recognition, not only, as they say now, that we have a mission, but that there *is* a Sender, which is a wholly different view of our position, and that He who sends is the loving Father, who has spoken to us in that dear Son who Himself made it His aim thus to obey, in order that it might be possible for us to re-echo His voice and to repeat His aim. The recognition of the Sender, the absolute submission of our wills to His, must run through all the life. You may do your daily work, whatever it be, with this for its motto: "The will of the Lord be done." And they who thus can look at their trade or profession, and see the trivialities and monotonies of their daily occupations in the transfiguring light of that great thought, will never need to complain that life is small, ignoble, wearisome, insignificant. As with pebbles in some clear brook with the sunshine on it, the water in which they are sunk glorifies and magnifies them. If you lift them out, they are but bits of dull stone; lying

beneath the sunlit ripples, they are jewels. Plunge the prose of your life and all its trivialities into that great stream, and it will magnify and glorify the smallest and the homeliest. Absolute submission to the Divine will and the ever-present thrilling consciousness of doing it were the secret of Christ's life, and ought to be the secret of ours.—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

EVOLUTION.

Matt. x. 29.—"One of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father."

Society existed before Christianity, and apart from it; and it has been developed hitherto upon lines which are not specifically Christian. It is, I suppose, coming to be recognised that the great dominant force in the process which has made society what it is is evolution in the shape of the survival of the fittest and the adaptation of the organism to its surroundings. This is no doubt a law of the vast providential ordering of things; it is an expression of the one great sovereign will, which in its sleepless care watches alike over the meanest and the greatest of the creatures it has made. But it does not come within the range of those Divine activities which are specially revealed to us by Christianity. True, we know, and Christ Himself has taught us, that not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father; but there we have a revelation of infinite value added to the doctrine of evolution rather than included in it. It is of all truths the most precious that evolution does proceed from a Father, but evolution itself does not tell us that. Evolution leaves its own harsh features unexplained. We need a voice Divine to tell us, and we need an act of faith to apprehend, that these seemingly harsh features ultimately proceed from the Father of all good, and there-

fore must be in themselves good, like the rest of His works, however difficult it may be for us to see it. If I may speak my own thought it is that Christianity stands over against evolution as its one main corrective. Without it we should have indeed a bitter doctrine; with it we can see through the dark and lowering clouds to the light which shines behind them.—Rev. Prof. Sanday, M.A., D.D.

REST.

Matt. xi. 20.—"Ye shall find rest to your souls."

Tradition says that many years ago a tribe of North American Indians were driven from their home by a furious fire. On and on they bounded as swiftly as their horses could carry them. Enveloped in clouds of smoke, they at length came to a river. Swimming over, they landed in a meadow secure from further peril. The chief threw down his spear to signify that this was to be the halting-place. As he did so he exclaimed, "Alabama!" which signifies "Here we may rest." So let us fly from the fires of sin, fling away the weapons of our rebellion against God, reach the green pastures and still waters of Christ's Gospel, and we shall be able to cry, "Alabama! Here we may rest!"—Rev. T. N. Stevenson.

COME TO JESUS.

Matt. xi. 28.—"Come unto Me, all ye that labour."

Perhaps what will be most remembered in my life, however insignificant in other respects, is one of the smallest things I ever did: the publication of the little tract "Come to Jesus." I suppose there are now four million copies of it all over the world. It is translated into almost as many languages as the Bible has been translated into, because

missionaries say it is so easy in style that it is easy to render, and that it contains the substance of the Gospel. There was a banquet on the occasion of a missionary anniversary. There were pipes, and there was whisky; nobody took to excess, but a fellow-teetotaler, a Scotch clergyman, and I found the fumes become so thick that we felt we did not need to remain much longer. So we quietly left the company; and we said, going through slums where people want missionaries as much as those abroad, "Let us have a missionary meeting here." So we borrowed a chair, and we had a duet. The children came, and we talked to the children, and the parents came out to listen to what the children were being told. Then I said, "Let us sing a little ditty that all the people in Hull, every one, knows: 'Come to Jesus, come to Jesus.'" Then I got up and said, "That is a very good text. Who is Jesus? He is God. Who is He? Man. Where is He? In heaven. Where is He? On earth. Why come? To be forgiven; to be made pure; to be made happy. Who should come to Him? You young people. Who? You old people. You have not much time; come now, this very minute." I went away thinking, "That will make a sermon." I preached it as a sermon on Sunday night, a queer sermon, with twenty heads.

Soon after that I had rheumatic fever, and as I was recovering I thought, "If I died I should have left nothing but temperance tracts, and I should like to leave an evangelical tract; I will write that out: every topic shall occupy two pages." It was rather an amusement, because there must be a measure between the copy and the size of the page, and when I had written my task for the day I generally found I had written twice too much; then I went over it, cut out every unnecessary sentence, made every long word a short word, in thorough Saxon style. I kept condensing it and counting it up again until I had got just the right number

of words to go into a page, and that was the work of a day. When the whole of it was ready I ordered two thousand copies. I thought, "I will give away a thousand, and my people will buy a thousand." So two thousand copies were printed, and a copy or two were sent to London, as such things always are, to some publisher. Within a month an order came for five or ten thousand copies; somebody had seen it and wanted to circulate it. And so without any advertising or without any commendation that little thing started on its journey. God chooses the small things; there is nothing in it to be vain about. It is such a small thing. Whatever excellence there is in it is that it is a bit of transparent glass through which you can see clearly God's own word. That is the chief event of my first ministry.—Rev. Newman Hall, D.D.

MISSIONS.

Matt. xvi. 3.—"The signs of the times."

Look at the mission amongst the Telugus. That is another story that I love to tell. It has strengthened my own faith in hours of despondency very marvellously. I remember very well in 1853, the year after I went to college, there was a meeting of the American Baptist Union at Albany, and the question raised was, "Shall we give up the Lone Star Mission among the Telugus?" One brother remonstrated. He said he had been there for many years, and added, "I am going there if it is only to die." And he went back. John E. Clough, a civil engineer, came forward and said, "I want to join that brother among the Telugus in the Lone Star Mission. It may be a hopeless task, but I have the impression that if you send me out there and work with me God will give us ten thousand souls in one year." They said, "We have always had some doubt

about this man, but now we have more doubt than ever." He presented himself again and again, and at last they said, "Mr. Clough, if we don't send you, what are you going to do?" "Get somebody else to send me." "If you cannot get anybody else to send you?" "Then I will go on my own responsibility." Then they said, "Here's a missionary who says that he will go back if only to die, and here is a man who says he will go on his own responsibility. Let us send him, and see what the Lord will do." You know the story. In 1877 there was a widespread famine, imperilling the lives of one hundred thousand people or more. This man went to the Government and said, "I am a civil engineer; here is the Buckingham Canal incomplete; give me the contract to finish that canal, and I will put these men on the work." They said, "Go," and he brought these starving men in companies of four or five thousand to work on the canal. At night-time, when the work of the day was over, he would tell them the story of Jesus. He had only just begun to learn the Telugu language, but he was a man of good sense, and he learnt by memory John iii. 16: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son," and when he got puzzled as to what to say he fell back on that, and, as he told me two years ago in that wonderful convention at Northfield, after he had learnt that text he could deliver a sermon half an hour long, and string texts together in the Telugu tongue. There was more Gospel in such a sermon as that than in a great many modern ones. Some sermons nowadays have not any Gospel in them at all. When the famine was over, and it was safe to receive members, he said to these awakened people, "Now, all of you who feel that you would like to confess Christ, come and be examined with reference to joining the Church, and be baptised"; and, as I have told you, 2,222 were baptised in one day, in six weeks 6,730,

and in ten months 10,000. The work has gone on to this day, and there is now a membership of between 30,000 and 40,000 people in that Church. It is the largest Christian Church of any denomination in the world, and last year they had an accession of ten thousand of their membership. Yet some say that missions are a failure.—Rev. A. T. Pierson, D.D.

TWO NEEDFUL THINGS.

Matt. xvi. 25.—"Whosoever will save his life shall lose it."

There is *nothing* necessary for a man which he can only get or keep by tampering with conscience. There are two things needful for us: God and righteousness; and there is no third. With these we have what we need; without them we have not. And nothing is worth the buying for which we have to part with absolute adherence to the law of right. You remember the quaint story of the man in the dock who said to the judge, "It is necessary that I should live," and was answered, "I do not see the necessity." No! And there is not a necessity for living if we have to sin in order to live. It is better to die. The one thing needful is "to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever." And so necessity, which is sometimes said to be "the tyrant's plea," is the coward's plea as well, and the weakling's plea. —Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

THE BIBLE.

Matt. xxi. 6.—"Have ye never read."

Who can eradicate out of the human mind the idea that the Bible is an old book? There is not one old leaf in all its garden. The roots are very old; they are old as God: but the leaves are monthly, yearly, daily, and they are all for the healing of the nations. The chief priests and scribes had their own chronology, and their own way of looking at

things; and Jesus had His, and again and again He said, Behold, this is David; this is Elias; this is Esaias; have ye never read? You may have read and put away your reading. That is the distinction between the Bible and all other books: you have to read and remember it; in the case of all other books you have to read and forget. Books always supplant themselves. Otherwise there would be no need to publish another book as long as the world standeth. It is the pride of all books that they do away with one another; a continual process of outshouldering is going on. Men have now a new Euclid. There is now a new arithmetic. If you at fifty years of age were to begin your ciphering and summing up in the presence of a student who has just passed the last examination, he would smile at your old ways; he would wonder that you should do such a simple sum in such a roundabout fashion. Whilst your head was bent upon your pencil, and you thought the young soul was looking upon advancing age with becoming reverence, that young soul would be smiling at your bald head. There is a new chemistry; there is a new philosophy. One philosopher gets up and puts another down; Sir William Hamilton arises and puts them both down; and John Stuart Mill comes and tears Sir William Hamilton's philosophy to shreds; and Herbert Spencer comes and grinds John Stuart Mill into powder and throws him away; and Lotze arises in Germany and laughs at the whole of them. This is useful; this is educational; this is incidental and inevitable to a true evolution of human thought. We claim for the Bible that no man can analyse it. All that man can do for the Bible is to illustrate it. And he will displace his own illustrations; he will always see how something brighter can be done. Over all the ages there rolls this grand interrogation: "Have ye never read?"—Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D.

THE LIVING CHRIST.

MATT. xxviii. 19.—"Lo, I am with you alway."

AT a Church Army Festival held in London a few days ago, Madame Antoinette Sterling took hold of a golden opportunity to deliver a great message for the time. Finding her way in the first instance to the hearts of her hearers by the sweet ministry of song, the talented artiste proceeded to give a brief address on the words, "God is living now." This, she said, was the thought she wished to impress on those present. If Madame Sterling were here to-night, I think she would allow me to paraphrase that beautiful testimony and to say, "The Son of the living God is with us now."—REV. A. H. RIX.

"STRAIGHTWAY."

MARK i. 20.—"And straightway He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after Him."

LAST Thursday, when I was speaking, I said that some Christian people had never told out the story of the Cross to others, and urged them to begin to do so at once. A young friend, sitting in this place, leaned over the front of the pew, and touched a friend sitting there, saying to her, "I would like to speak to you about that." He had never spoken to her before, he did not even know her, and he thus addressed her while the service was proceeding. A member of the Church, sitting by her side, who heard what the young man said, was so pleased with his prompt action that she stayed after the service to sympathise and help while he explained the way of salvation. The young person to whom he spoke came to tell me last Tuesday that she had found the Saviour through that well-timed effort. Dear friends, that is the way to serve the Lord. If we were to do things at the moment when they occurred to us, we should do them to purpose.—REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

NO RETREAT.

MARK xvi. 15.—"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel."

WE cannot turn back, go back, leave the field, surrender the fight; we must go on. Are we the men to go back until we are called back? I know that Jesus said, "Go ye"; I never heard Him say, "and come back again." I have seen and appreciated the minstrel's picture of the husbandman going forth weeping, bearing precious seed, and coming again. How? Bringing his sheaves with him. So may all missionaries return, not to report defeat, but to record a victory. You remember that when Napoleon I. was in a hard fix, the fight going against him, he said to a little drummer-boy, "Boy, beat a retreat." The boy made no reply, except through his eyes, which were written all over with unwillingness. Said the great soldier, "Boy, beat a retreat," and the boy said, "Sire, I can't do that; Desai" (his teacher) "never taught me that. I can beat a march that would make the dead fall into line; I did it at Lodi; I did it at the Pyramids; I did it at Mount Tabor: may I do it now?" And he did it; and over the dead and the wounded and the batteries and the whole scene of desolation the army went on to victory. Never beat any retreat in Christ's cause. Beat a march that will make the dead fall into line. Touch the heroic nerve, the patriotic pulse, the Christian soul. If that is your "cannot"—cannot go back—blessed are ye!—REV. JOSEPH PARKER, D.D.

ZACCHÆUS.

LUKE xix. 3.—"He was little of stature."

GREAT are the advantages of disadvantages. Are not the world's great men most often those who have had to over-

come all kinds of disadvantages? It was the overcoming of the disadvantages that was the beginning of their greatness. It is a great deal better to be four feet six if because you are little you have to be full of energy and to be clever at finding out ways of overcoming difficulties, than it is to be six feet four and never have to take any trouble about anything. That having to take trouble is really the school in which genius is trained. This is the first lesson for us: the advantage of disadvantage. You who need it, take it right home to yourselves. Zacchæus might have sat down in his doorway watching all that went by, and sighing, "Ah, look at that man; what a fine fellow he is! If I were only so tall as he is! And see those people there in the very front; ah, if I were only where they are!" He might have fretted and sighed. But there was another thing he could do: he could say, "Because I am so little, I must make up for it somehow," and he ran before and climbed up into the tree. Now there is always a tree waiting for Zacchæus, always the advantage to balance the disadvantage, somewhere and somehow. *We are all of us short in something.* Some are short in understanding. Ah, if you could only understand things! If you were only clever, and knew as much as some people do! Well, get the advantage of your disadvantage, and say within yourself, "My Lord, seeing I cannot bring Thee great knowledge, I will seek to make up for it by bringing Thee much love. If I know so little I would fain serve Thee more to make up for it, because my service is so poor." Well, hot hasty people can bring to their Lord a warmth of devotion that others cannot. Seeing you are so easily set on fire, pray the gracious Master that He would teach you to blaze for Him. Some have the disadvantage of position—without influence; without money; without power. What can I give to Thee, my Lord? Well, because I have nothing else, I must give Thee myself, to be

Thine own, always, altogether Thine. Look all through the story of the Lord Jesus, and you see it is everywhere true—the advantage of disadvantage. It is the simple fishermen of Galilee who can follow Him because they have no great sacrifice to make and no social considerations to weigh. It is the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind who do know the Saviour's gracious pity and His healing power. It is the poor widow who has but two mites who earns the Master's praise for generous giving. It is the heathen mother who has none to speak for her, and who provokes the disciples by her persistency, that wins such a word of admiration as none else ever had. It is the poor woman who cannot come at Him for the press that pulls the hem of the garment hanging within reach of her trembling grasp. Come, dear soul, my Lord is always nearest to those who have most hindrances, and always wants to do most for those who need Him most. You who seem to have everything against you—who look back, and it seems as if you never had the chance that others have; who look within, and it seems as if your case were a thousand times more difficult than that of others; who look around, and nobody seems to be hemmed in by such hindrances as you have—come, whatever may happen to others, be quite sure that the Lord *must* help you. All that He is, all that He has, all that He has promised, is specially meant for you. There were two men who had the best view of Jesus in Jericho. The one was short of stature, and could not see because of the press; *and the other was quite blind.* What an advantage was their disadvantage! Come, come, dear soul, here is a new topic of praise to-day, a new source of hope, and fresh ground of confidence. My Lord, if I can praise Thee for nothing else I can praise Thee for my disadvantages.—Rev. Mark Guy Pearse.

DEATH.

LUKE xxiii. 46.—"Father, into Thy hand I commend My spirit."

THERE are a great many men to whom death comes as a great mystery. Last week the friends of Walt Whitman gathered to lay his body away in the grave, and Robert Ingersoll was invited to speak to them; and he gave his interpretation of death, and I bring it here to-night and read it just because his conception of death is so skilfully, so gracefully couched, and I wish you to hear what a man with all the skilled art of the rhetorician can say for that view of death which looks upon it only as a great mystery: "He was not afraid to live, not afraid to speak his thought. Neither was he afraid to die. For many years he and Death lived near neighbours. He was always willing and ready to meet and greet this thing called Death; and for many months he sat in the deepening twilight waiting for the night, waiting for the light. In his brain were the blessed memories of the day, and in his heart were mingled the dawn and dusk of life. He was not afraid, cheerful every moment. The laughing nymphs of day did not desert him. They remained that they might clasp the hand of the veiled and silent sisters of the night when they should come. And when they did come Walt Whitman stretched his hands to both, on one side the nymphs of the day, on the other the silent sisters of the night. And so hand in hand, between smiles and tears, he reached his journey's end. From the frontier of life, from the western wave-kissed shore, he sent us messages of content and hope; and these messages seem now like strains of music blown by the mystic trumpeter from Death's pale realm. To-day we give back to Mother Nature, to her clasp and kiss, one of the bravest, sweetest souls that ever lived in human clay."

Mr. Ingersoll has put with rhetorical beauty this conception of Death as "a great mystery"; and yet take the flowers from his speech, turn it into simple Anglo-Saxon, and what mean these words: "We give back to Nature's bosom, to her clasp and kiss"? What do you give back to Mother Earth? You give the body to decay and to be food for worms. Dust to dust, earth to earth, ashes to ashes—that is all that Agnosticism can say when the body of the loved one is dropped into the grave. And these "veiled sisters" are silent, with no speech of love upon their lips. "We give our loved one to the home of silence and shadows." This is Hades. It is the old Greek resting-place, the old Hebrew resting-place. It is paganism, paganism skilfully veiled in attractive language, paganism draped with flowers of rhetoric, but paganism,—our friend given back to the worms or to a silent, shadowy land. No voice speaks from these silent sisters; no gleam shines from their veiled eyes. So the old Hebrew prophets met death. They knew not the light that shines from the cross of Christ. So many a pagan in ancient time has met death. So Socrates met death. So good men and true in our time meet death. All that philosophic Agnosticism can tell us concerning death is this: Be brave, and meet our enemy with a brave heart. Is that the best? Is there nothing beyond? Death as an executioner, Death as a robber, Death as a veiled and silent image –is that all? No; there is also Death as Christ met him, Death as thousands and tens of thousands have met him following Christ. For these words: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," have been uttered from many a death-bed since the Saviour uttered them on the cross. What do they mean? What is the spirit that underlies them? This is not the cry of one who clasps his hands and asks for a moment more of mercy from the executioner. It is not the

cry of one who begs for pity from the robber who has come to take from him all that he holds dear. It is not the courageous challenge of one who meets a veiled and silent enemy whose meaning he cannot comprehend. "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." It is, first of all, a spirit that speaks—a spirit, not a body; an immortal, an undying spirit. Oh that we could rid ourselves of this inwrought and ineradicable paganism which confounds us with our bodies! When I die, may no friend lock my body in an iron casket to keep it from the worms. I wish we had adopted in this country the basket burial that was in use in England a few years ago. I wish my body might be laid in the basket and reverently covered with something that the earth might not fall close upon it, and then left for Mother Nature to do her work and out of it to call forth the grass and the flowers to bloom the next year and the years to come. When to my Father I commend my spirit, I want this body no more; it is gone for ever; and God shall give it a body as it pleaseth Him. I am free of it. This is first: I am a spirit, not a body; and, next, Death, coming to me, comes not as an executioner to inflict deserved penalty, not as a robber to pluck from me all that I hold dear, not as a mystery, a veiled and silent figure. He is my Father; no skeleton, with scythe in one hand and hour-glass in the other, but my Father; no robber creeping upon me to take my possessions, but my Father; no veiled figure whom I cannot comprehend, no silent figure, with no word of love for me, but my Father. Death is only one way of spelling "Father"; and when He comes I run up the shining way to meet Him, though He Himself has come to me.—Rev. Lyman Abbott, D.D.

THEOLOGY.

LUKE xxiv. 32.—"And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

As Dr. George Macdonald reminds us, the word "theology" is just the two Greek words, the Word of God. Christ, the Word, is our theology; and we want, and we will have, no other.—REV. C. SYLVESTER HORNE, M.A.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

JOHN iv. 1—42.

EVER since that day Jacob's well has sprung up with a deep parable for the Church of Christ. The well is deep, but the water is good; and the experiences of life make a pitcher that goes down to the very bottom of the well. For that Samaritan woman at her worst is still the sister and the similitude of us all. Her thirsty heart is our heart. She had not all her days found satisfaction and rest for her heart, and no more have we. The truth is, rest and satisfaction are not to be had in this life. Every human heart finds this life sooner or later, by this road or that, to be a dry and thirsty land. With all its enjoyments and with all its employments, as the Psalmist says, it is a land where no water is. This poor Samaritan widow, with her five dead husbands, is the too perfect picture of us all. In her youth she, too, had a very thirsty heart, and she tried many wells, one well after another; but either they held no water, or the water they did hold was too deep for her rope and wheel, or she had no rope and no wheel and no pitcher wherewith to draw, till now, in her still raging thirst, she was reduced to drink ditch water. God forbid that any of us here should follow all her thirsty footsteps;

but let us not be too sure ; unless we are satisfied early with His mercy, as good and better men and women than we are have become very sisters and very brothers in sin of this sinful Samaritan woman. When a man is digging a well in his field or in his garden, and when, before his shaft has been sunk to its proper depth, he strikes upon a seam of obstructing rock, he then takes the most approved and the most powerful explosives, and with them he bores and breaks and shatters the rock into atoms in order that he may get down beneath that rock so as to carry his well to where the water will gather. And, in like manner, our Lord, finding that He had come to a hidden rock in this woman's heart, and that no more progress was to be made by His first instruments, suddenly said to the woman, "Go, call thy husband, and come hither." No blasting powder ever shook and rent a rock as these few words of our Lord shook and rent and laid open the woman's heart. Husband! she said. Husband! and she would have fallen at His feet if she had not laid hold of the mouth of the well. Husband! I have no husband, she said, looking at the earth. And then, like a man who mines out the rocks and the stones his hammer and his fire have just shattered to sand, our Lord said to the prostrate woman, No ; and thou hast not yet told all the truth : for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband. In *that* saidst thou the truth.—Rev. A. Whyte, D.D.

THE OBSTINATE.

John v. 40.—"Ye will not."

Given an obstinate will, and even Christ cannot overcome it. Omnipotence is powerless when the will resents the approaches of grace. A child can say, "No," to God ; a child can shut out the sun ; the little almost transparent eyelid

can shut out the whole sky of God—blue, beauteous, radiant, trembling with a kind of half-life; yet a child can close its eyes and shut out the whole apocalypse. Jesus Christ represents Himself in these words: "Behold, I stand at the door"—outside the door—"and knock; if any man open the door"—I cannot open it—"If any man open the door I will come in": I am ready; I wait for the man to become prepared. God waits to be gracious.—Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D.

GOD'S SLAVES.

John viii. 36.—"If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Such slavery is the only nobility. In the wicked old empires, as in some of their modern survivals to-day, viziers and prime ministers were mostly drawn from the servile classes. It is so in God's kingdom. They who make themselves God's slaves are by Him made kings and priests, and shall reign with Him on earth. "If a slave, then a son and an heir of God through Jesus Christ." Remember the alternative. You cannot be your own masters without being your own slaves. It is a far worse bondage to live chartered libertines than to live in the paths of obedience. Better serve God than the devil; than the world; than the flesh. Whilst they promise you liberty, they make you "the most abject and downtrodden vassal of perdition."—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

"I AM THE LIFE."

John x. 10.—"I am come that they might have life."

Let me tell you in conclusion an incident that happened when Mr. Moody was preaching. Some mechanic, who did not enjoy the benefit of the eight hours movement, was

going home from work. Curiosity tempted him to force his way into the crowded hall in which Mr. Moody was speaking, and he stood with his back against the door. Just at that moment Mr. Moody put out his hand. It seemed as if he were addressing him. "Will you take eternal life as a gift?" said Mr. Moody. The man felt it such a direct question that he said, "Eternal life as a gift! Will I take it? I shall be a great fool if I don't." And in that blunt and simple way he resolved to throw himself on the mercy of God, and received it. That was some years ago. To-day he is a happy Christian worker in Lancashire. I repeat the question. Will you receive this life, which is Christ, as a free gift, because God loves you so much, because He cannot help loving you? God saves us not because we have done anything to deserve it, but because He cannot help it. I should be sorry to preach here without quoting what seem to me to be the most beautiful words in the Bible: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgression *for Mine own sake*"—"for My own sake," not because you deserve it, not because you need it or want it. God finds more pleasure in saving than we in being saved. May the desire of God be gratified this hour, for Christ's sake.—Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, M.A.

"I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE."

John xiv. 6.—"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

Christ the Way.—As the inspired writer says, the new and living Way, by which every human being can come at once, immediately, to the Father. I confess that I entirely agree with the memorable words of the illustrious Robertson, of Brighton, that the highest duty of the Christian minister is to bring his fellow-man to Christ and then himself to get out of the way. Some may remember the memorable conversa-

tion between Alexander the Great and Diogenes the Cynic: "What can Alexander do for Diogenes?" "What can Alexander do for Diogenes? Alexander can do for Diogenes only one thing: he can have the goodness to cease to stand between Diogenes and the sun." And in like manner I, too, must say that the highest service which any human being can render me is to abstain from standing between me and the Sun of righteousness when He has arisen with healing in His wings. Let none of us make the mistake into which Philip fell on the occasion of my text. Let us not say, "Show us the Father." Has Christ been so long with you, and are you as ignorant as was Philip? Christ and the Father are one, and he who has seen Christ has seen the Father. Come to Christ, and you have already come to the Father. Let me then at this point ask every one of you, in the presence of God, a pointed and direct question. Let me put it in the form in which a Scotch shepherd put it to a young man who afterwards became a burning and shining light in the Church of God. This simple-minded shepherd, walking along a sheep-path in the Highlands, met this young minister of religion, and greeted him with the strange salute, "Do you know the Father?" and, without waiting for any answer, he went his way. "Do you know the Father?" The question kept ringing in the memory of that young man, until his conscience was aroused, and he came to know the Father. Nearly half a century afterwards he was in the same part of Scotland, and, singularly enough, he met the same man, now very old; and the old man repeated the same question: "Do you know the Father?" and, with a happy smile, he was able to answer, "I do." Now, by one of those strange coincidences, for one moment I cross your path at Grindelwald, but we may never meet again. Do you know the Father?—Rev. Hugh Price Hughes M.A.

JUDAS.

JOHN xviii. 5.—"And Judas also."

ARE there any people here this morning whom God is teaching obedience to His light touch by letting them run their course after some one specific sin? Perhaps there are. At all events, let us remember that that position of being allowed to do as we like is one to which we all tend in the measure in which we indulge our inclinations and shut our hearts against God's pleadings. There is such a thing as a conscience seared as with a hot iron. They used to say that there were witches' marks in the body, places where, if you shoved a pin in, there was no feeling. Men cover themselves all over with marks of that sort, which are not sensitive even to the prick of a Divine remonstrance, rebuke, or retribution. "They wipe their mouths and say, 'I have done no harm.'" You can tie up the clapper of the bell that swings on the black rock on which if you drift you go to pieces. You can silence the voice by the simple process of neglecting it. Judas set his teeth against two things: the solemn conviction that Jesus Christ knew his sin and the saving assurance that Jesus Christ loved him still. And whosoever resists either of these two is getting perilously near to the point where, not in petulance, but in pity, God will say, "Very well, I have called, and ye have refused. Now go, and do what you want to do, and see how you like it when it is done." "What thou doest, do quickly." Do you remember the other word, "If *'twere* done when 'tis done, then 'twere well 't were done quickly"; but since consequences last when deeds are past, perhaps you had better halt before you determine to do it.—REV. A. MACLAREN, D.D.

PENTECOST.

ACTS ii. 4. –"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."

NOR must we forget how the same motion of the same atmosphere stirs the young leaves on the summer trees and fans the hot cheek, and, gathering force, devastates cities and sweeps all before it. The variety in the operations and the might of the Agent are wonderfully expressed in the symbol. The fire that parted itself into flames, and yet was all one, howsoever divided, is, too, a familiar emblem which needs little expansion. It may need that we who profess to be Christians should lay more to heart what it commands and enables us to be. Fire is death; but fire is life too. And it is the vital, quickening, purifying, transforming energy of fire, not its consuming and annihilating force, which is expressed for us in this emblem. We speak of warm affections, fiery impulses, hearts glowing, spirits flaming with zeal, and metaphors of the like sort. And all these just cover the same ground as that image of the fire from heaven which Christ has come to cast broadcast upon the earth. Where God's Spirit is there will be no coldness; where His Spirit is there will be no dead, hard obstinacy, as of black coal and green, smoky wood; where His Spirit is it will turn all into its own fiery likeness, and out of the most unpromising material will evoke shooting flames that aspire upwards to their source. The condition of all goodness is enthusiasm, and the Author of all holy enthusiasm is that fiery Spirit which will sit upon each of us. And, brethren, whilst it is true that these symbols were but for a moment—did their work of heralding and died away like the breeze that precedes the sunlight, and, as it were, says to a waiting world, "The dawn is coming," and then sinks into calm—let us not forget that the reality abides, and that the rushing

of that mighty wind has not sunk into sickly, stagnating calm, nor has that mass of fire died down into cold and blackness. The gift abides, though the symbols have passed.—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

DIVINITY IN HUMANITY.

Acts vi. 5.—"Full of faith."

Faith in man is not a belief that man is to-day a great, noble character, but it is a perception in man of dormant possibilities of greatness and nobility which time and God will develop. It is only the man that has faith in man who can really interpret man. It is faith in man that gives us all true human insight. The difference between a photograph and a portrait is this: the photograph gives the outward feature, and stops there; and most of us, when we stand in a photograph saloon to have our picture taken, hide our soul away. The artist sees the soul behind the man, knows him, understands something of his nature, and paints the soul that looks out through the eyes. He sees in the man something which the sun does not exhibit, and makes that something shine on the canvas. The artist in literature sees an ideal humanity, and interprets it. Realism in literature does not portray the real man. Anthony Trollope pictures the Englishman as he is to-day, and society as any man may take it with a kodak; but Dickens gives us Toby Veck and Tiny Tim, George Eliot Adam Bede and Dinah Morris. Men say that no such boy ever lived as Macdonald has portrayed in Sir Gibbie. In every street Arab is a possible Sir Gibbie; and Macdonald has seen the possible and shown us what Christianity may make out of the street Arab. In this perception of a possible in man lies the spirit of all progress in science. The man of practical science laughs at the notion of an

iron railway on which steam-cars shall travel faster than English coaches, but the man of faith in men, who believes that it is in the power of men to dominate the powers of nature, builds the road. The man of practical science laughs at the notion that we can reach up our hand into the clouds and draw down the lightning, but Franklin does it. The man of faith is sometimes mistaken, but he is always experimenting, because he always believes that man to morrow will be more than man is to-day or was yesterday. And all progress in civilisation has its secret in this great faith in man as a being that has a mastery, not yet interpreted, not yet understood, not yet comprehended in its fulness, over all the powers of nature.—Rev. L. Abbott, D.D.

GOD NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS.

Acts x. 35.—"And in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him."

That white sheet was an image of a world washed white, its four corners a sign that men should come from north and south and east and west. And the assurance that God had cleansed all showed that He was no respecter of persons, that He counted Gentiles as on the same level as Jews, and that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted. There is no need to bring either earth or water from Palestine; all soil is equally sacred, all water equally holy, all men equally welcome to God. "God loved the world."—Rev. F. B. Meyer.

RHODA.

Acts xii. 14.—"And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness."

"She opened not the door for gladness," but ran in and told them. Yes! And if, whilst she was running in with

her message, Herod's quaternions of soldiers had come down the street, there would have been "no small stir" in the *Church* as to "what had become of Peter." He would have gone back to his prison sure enough. Her *first* duty was to open the door; her *second* one was to go and tell the brethren, "We have got him safe inside"; but in the rush of joyous emotion she naïvely forgot what her first business was, "lost her head," as we say, and so went off to tell that he was outside instead of letting him in. Now joy and sorrow are equally apt to make us forget plain and pressing duties, and we may learn from this little incident the old-fashioned but always necessary advice to keep feeling well under control, to use it as impulse, not as guide, and never to let emotion, which should be down in the engine-room, come on deck and take the helm. It is dangerous to obey feeling, unless its decrees are countersigned by calm common-sense illuminated by Scripture. Sorrow is apt to obscure duty by its darkness, and joy by its dazzle. It is hard to see the road at midnight, or at midday when the sun is in our eyes. Both need to be controlled. Duty remains the same whether my heart be beating like a sledge-hammer, or whether my "bosom-lord sits lightly on its throne." Whether I am sad or glad, the door that God has given me to watch has to be opened and shut by me. And whether I am a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord, like Rhoda in Mary's, or have an office that people think larger and more important, the imperativeness of my duties is equally independent of my momentary emotions and circumstances. Remember then that duty remains while feeling fluctuates, and that, sorrowful or joyful, we have still the same Lord to serve and the same crown to win.—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

NATURE.

Acts xiv. 15—17.—"Which made heaven and earth and the sea and all things that are therein," etc.

Material Nature, which is the only sphere that earthly science talks of, treats us as she treats her fallen leaves; but "our Father" opens His sky-door, saying, "Now, children, come and see where all time's flowers and fruit come from, where youth and marriage originate, and where family life and gladness keep festival for ever." Shall we not withdraw our spirits from a region which has no heart, and pledge our affections to the Father of our spirits and to the inner and purer regions which are love's homes? If we prefer material Nature to the living God, the way is perfectly open for us to put our faith and trust in her; but whatever be our devotion to her, she will be deaf to our prayers, and without one spark of sympathy will swallow us up in death. But if we roll our affections on God in Christ His pure sympathy will stream through our souls, and in that sympathy is eternal life.—Rev. John Pulsford, D.D.

MISSIONARY EFFORT.

Acts xvi. 9.—"Come over into Macedonia and help us."

Disraeli said, "The young do the real work of the world." Ruskin writes, "The most beautiful works of all art were done in youth." Rome was founded by Romulus before he was twenty. David's victory over Goliath was achieved whilst he was a ruddy-faced stripling. Luther was only thirty-five when he appeared at the Diet of Worms. At twenty-three Melanchthon wrote his "Loci Communes," and ten years afterwards he set out the Augsburg Confession. Calvin wrote the epoch-marking and epoch-making "Institutes" when he was three years under thirty. Zwingli's

best work was done before he was forty. Milton resolved to make his life a "poem" before the prose of the world had fixed itself in the habits of life. Carey was under thirty years of age when he wrote that "first and greatest" paper on missions, entitled "The Inquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens," a pamphlet which was as the voice of a prophet, crying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Lord Shaftesbury began his fight with social misery in the freshness of his young manhood. William Lloyd Garrison girt himself with the sword of freedom whilst the hot blood of youth was coursing through his veins. Moffat and Livingstone, Comber and Hannington, and an exceeding great army of missionaries said, like young Isaiah, in response to God's summons, "Here am I; send me." The messenger of the Highest, John the Baptist, finished his work as a young man; and the Christ whom he pioneered was six months his junior. Wherefore, seeing that you are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, shirk no task, seize every opportunity of helping the needy, and run with patience the race of missionary service, "looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of the faith." Our responsibilities have ceased to be insular, and become universal.—Rev. J. Clifford, D.D.

SAFE TO LAND.

Acts xxvii. 44. "Some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship, and so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land."

Heaven is not a dead level. Every man there will receive as much blessedness as he is capable of, but capacities will vary, and the principal factor in determining the capacity, which capacity determines the blessedness, will be the

thoroughness of obedience to all the ordinances of Christ in the course of the life upon earth. So, though we know, and therefore dare say, little about that future, I do beseech you to take this to heart: that he who there can stand before God and say, "Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me," will wear a crown brighter than the starless ones of those who saved themselves, and have brought none with them. "Some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship, they all came safe to land." But the place where they stand depends on their Christian life, and of that Christian life one main element is obedience to the commandment which makes them the apostles and missionaries of their Lord.—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

CHRISTIAN ENTHUSIASM.

Rom. ix. 3—"I could have wished myself accursed."

"I could have wished myself to be anathema from Christ," says St. Paul, "on behalf of my brethren." Smaller natures have been quite shocked by the expression, yet Moses had cried long before, "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin— ; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written." Danton in the French Revolution was no Christian, yet even Danton could exclaim, "Be my name branded if only France be freed"; and the mission preacher who revived religious life in England exclaimed, "Let George Whitefield perish if God be glorified." —Ven. Archdeacon F. W. Farrar.

THE CHARACTER OF GOD.

Rom. ix. 18.—"Whom He will He hardeneth."

Not long ago an adult Bible-class of Welsh Nonconformists was studying the Epistle to the Romans. The day came

for reading that difficult chapter in which the doctrine of predestination is so unflinchingly handled, in which hard sayings, such as "On whom He will He hath mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth," if crudely taken set the teeth of even reverent criticism on edge. Before beginning one of the class said in his homely style, by way of caution, "Mind, boys, whichever way you take it, keep the character of God clean." Whole shelves of theology might be touched without one finding a more golden maxim than this of the Welsh collier.—Right Rev. F. Jayne, D.D., Bishop of Chester.

SMALL GIFTS.

1 Cor. i. 26.—"Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble, are called."

The coral insect is microscopic, but it will build up from the profoundest depth of the ocean a reef against which the whole Pacific may dash in vain. It is the small gifts that, after all, are the important ones. So let us cultivate them the more earnestly the more humbly we think of our own capacity. Play well thy part; there all the honour lies. God, who has builded up some of the towering Alps out of mica flakes, builds up His Church out of infinitesimally small particles—slenderly endowed men touched by the consecration of His love.—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

HOLD THE FORT.

1 Cor. iv. 2.—"That a man be found faithful."

On one occasion William Pitt turned to George III. and said, "If this is done I shall resign." George III. turned round to Pitt and said, "I can't resign." The monarch can't vacate his throne, though the Prime Minister may leave his chair in the Cabinet. My friend, do you know

this: you cannot resign? You are a monarch on the throne of conscience, and you cannot get down from that throne; you are a fixture there. There is no such thing as resigning; you can't evade responsibility, you can't shirk duty, you can't be silent when testimony is demanded, and you cannot be inactive when duty calls for activity. You cannot resign nor vacate your throne without imperilling your soul.—Rev. A. T. Pierson, D.D.

THE INFINITE LOVER.

1 Cor. vi. 20.—"We are not our own."

The only way by which we can win another for ourselves is by giving ourselves to that other. Hearts are only bought by hearts; love's flame can only be kindled by love's flame. The only way by which one spiritual being can possess another is when the possessed loves and yields to the love of the possessor. And thus Jesus Christ makes us His own by giving Himself to us for our own. Brethren, there is no power known in humanity that can, I was going to say, decentralise a human life and lift it clean off its pivot of self except the power of the unspeakable love of Jesus Christ on the cross. We revolve round our own centres; self is our centre; but that great Sun of righteousness has mass enough to draw hearts and lives from their little orbit, and to turn them into satellites of its own. And then they move in music and in light around the Sun of their souls. If you want to know the blessedness of losing self, yield to the love of Him who forgot Himself for you and gave Himself for you. Nothing else will conquer that miserable demon of self-regard that cracks his whip and rattles his chains in all our hearts. But Christ is Conqueror because Christ is the infinite Lover. He gave Himself that He might buy us for Himself. Therefore to

live for myself is death, is blasphemy, is ingratitude; and the only fitting response to Him who thus yielded all for us is that we should come and say, "We are not our own; we are bought with a price."—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

TIME.

1 Cor. vii. 29.—"The time is short."

The great broad field of time is portioned out, like the strips of peasant allotments, which show a little bit here, with one kind of crop upon it, bordered by another little morsel of ground, bearing another kind of crop. So the whole is patchy, and yet all harmonises in effect if we look at it from high enough up. Thus each life is made up of a series, not merely of successive moments, but of well-marked epochs, each of which has its own character, its own responsibilities, its own opportunities, in each of which there is some special work to be done, some grace to be cultivated, some lesson to be learned, some sacrifice to be made; and if it is let slip it never comes back any more. "It might have been once, and we missed it, lost it for ever."—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

THE UNITY OF RACES.

1 Cor. x. 17.—"For we, being many, are one body."

There are two kinds of mosaics recognised by the students of art. One of them is termed "the Byzantine," in which the patchwork is painfully apparent, each piece of glass being separated by dark lines that mar the unity of the picture; and the other is called "the Roman," where the parts are so nicely adjusted and so admirably ground down that the surface shows one unbroken composition. The purpose of religion in the world is to collect and combine the minute and discordant particles of mankind, the separate and often

meagre individuals, into a fellowship that shall obliterate ethnic distinctions and impart to all a character essentially and sympathetically identical. This has never been done nor even seriously attempted by heathenism. Where it prevails there are tribes, ranks, castes, and the dark lines that divide are as perceptible as in a Byzantine mosaic, even where allegiance to one leader, such as Buddha or Mahomet, is actually professed. On the other hand, Christianity has succeeded remarkably, though not completely, in this sublime undertaking. She, too, has produced, and is still producing, a mosaic. There are lines in her work, for the whole hath not yet grown into a perfect body in the Lord, but they are not rude, coarse, and apparently marking division. They are so delicate and so subdued that the Saxon, the Indian, the African, the rich and the poor brought together in the name of Christ, make but one humanity: the humanity that reproduces His spirit and life. —Rev. G. Lorimer, D.D.

LOVE.

1 Cor. xiii. 13.—"The greatest of these is charity."

George Sand reminds us, "It is the heart that governs the world; it is feeling that performs the real miracles of history." "The affections," says Emerson, "are the real quickeners of the intellect." Emotion supplies the dynamic element in oratory and in life. "Love is, and was, my Lord and King." "And now abideth faith, hope, love, and the greatest of these is love."—Rev. J. Clifford, D.D.

PRESENT WITH THE LORD.

2 Cor. v. 6–8.—"Knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord," etc.

May we go a step further and suggest that perhaps in the bold metaphor of my text there is an answer to the questions

which so often rack loving and parted hearts? "Do the dead know aught of what affects us here, and can they do aught but gaze on Him, and love, and rest?" If it be that there is any such analogy, as seems to be dimly shadowed in my text, between the relation of the body on earth to the spirit that inhabits it and that of Jesus Christ to him who dwells in Him, and is clothed by Him, then it may be that as the flesh, so the Christ, transmits to the spirit that has Him for its home impressions from the outside world, and affords a means of action upon that world. Christ may be, if I might so say, the sensorium of the disembodied spirit; and Christ may be the hand of the man who hath no other instrument by which to express himself. But all that is fancy perhaps, speculation certainly; and yet there seems to be a shadow of a foundation for at least entertaining the possibility of such a thought as that Jesus is the means of knowing and the means of acting to those who rest from their labours in Him and dwell in peace in His arms. But be that as it may, the reality of a close communion and encircling by the felt presence of Jesus Christ, which in its blessed closeness will make the closest communion here seem to be obscure, is certainly declared in the words before us. Then this transition is regarded in my text as being the work of a moment. It is not a long journey of which the beginning is "to go *from* home, from the body," and the end is "to *go* home, to the Lord"; but it is one and the same motion which, looked at from the one side, is departure, and looked at from the other, is arrival. The old saying has it, "There is but a step between me and death." The truth is, there is but a step between me and *life*. The mighty angel in the Apocalypse, that stood with one foot on the firm land and the other on the boundless ocean, is but the type of the spirit in the brief moment of transition when the consciousness of two worlds blends, and it is clothed

upon with the house which is from heaven, in the very act of stripping off the earthly house of this tabernacle. Nor need I remind you, I suppose, in more than a sentence, that this transition obviously leads into a state of conscious communion with Jesus Christ. The dreary figment of an unconscious interval for the disembodied spirit has no foundation either in what we know of spirit, or in what is revealed to us in Scripture. For the one thing that seems to make it probable—the use of that metaphor of "sleeping in Jesus"—is quite sufficiently accounted for by the notions of repose, and cessation of outward activity, and withdrawal of capacity of being influenced by the so-called realities of this lower world, without dragging in the unfounded notion of unconsciousness. My text is incompatible with it, for it is absurd to say of an unconscious spirit, clear of a bodily environment, that it is anywhere; and there is no intelligible sense in which the condition of such a spirit can be called being "with the Lord." So then I think a momentary transition, with uninterrupted consciousness, which leads to a far deeper and more wonderful and blessed sense of unity with Jesus Christ than is possible here on earth, is the true shape in which the act of death presents itself to the Christian thinker.—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

THE SIXTH SENSE.

Gal. iii. 7. "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham."

Faith has been called the sixth sense; I would amend the expression and say it is all the senses in one, with an accent and an addition peculiarly its own. Faith is life. Faith is not an attribute, an element, an incident, something separable; faith is the life, that which touches God, communicates with heaven, receives the treasures of eternity, develops

them, perfects them, returns them in proof of industry and honourableness. Faith has been degraded by being made into a kind of intellectual hack, a miserable, servile power in the life by which men are made to assent to things they do not understand. That is not faith at all. Faith is not a piece of church furniture. Faith is manhood at its best, life at its supremest, Divinest point. Faith understands nothing; faith despises understanding after a certain point. Faith is winged power, flying away to the tabernacle of the sun and worshipping in the temple of the unveiled presence of the Godhead.—Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Gal. v. 22.—"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace."

The Gulf Stream in its beneficent and hidden influence may be taken as a sort of parable of this spiritual influence. This England of ours should be naturally and properly a land of almost eternal winter. For some eight months of the year our very seas ought to be frozen over so that no ship could approach our shores. Our islands should be a rough rude tract of country where only the hardiest forms of life could survive—a land of forest where wild beasts should roam whose furs should give to the place almost its only value, and where the deep snows should make agriculture almost impossible. This should be Great Britain—a proud name for so desolate a tract. What mystery is this which delivers us? Away in the distant southern world, in the fierce heat of the tropics, starts the Gulf Stream. It gathers the warmth of the sun and sends it for thousands of miles across the seas to lave our shores. And thus the arctic winter is driven from us, and our ports are open all the year round; over us stretch the kindlier skies; about us blow the gentler winds; our fields are covered with grass,

the valleys are thick with corn; the pastures are covered with flocks and herds; and this favoured land is shut off from extremes, and has the summer of the North with the winter of the South. Now think of some shivering native of Labrador who has heard of this Gulf Stream, and scornfully shakes his head. "I do not believe it," says he; "it is impossible and absurd." Well, I would not argue the subject. I would only invite him to come and see. "But where is this Gulf Stream which does such wonders? Can you see it?" No, we cannot see it, *but it is there*—hidden, noiseless, mingling with our waters and transforming our climate. The parable is a many-sided illustration of the truth. Of nature, of ourselves, we do dwell in a land of winter—frozen and well-nigh dead; without the energy to put forth any life of God. But lo, about us do flow gracious influences from another world. We know not how, but by the Holy Spirit of God there is breathed about us and within us the love of God, softening, transforming, bringing to us a new heaven and a new earth. And now do grow and flourish blessed things which before we knew not. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."—Rev. Mark Guy Pearse.

SEED-SOWING.

Gal. vi. 7.—"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Imagine not that, having had a season of seed-sowing, you can run away from the harvest, for the harvest will run after you, and you will have to reap it, here or at the Antipodes, or in the invisible state. That black harvest must be cut down and garnered, and you must keep the key of the granary. Sometimes it seems as if it were not so. There have arisen in the Church from age to age men who have

been troubled by the prosperity of the wicked, saying, Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish; they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men; violence compasseth them about as a chain; they live in palaces, they play on harps and viols, and whatsoever they call for the answer is immediately at hand; the righteous are driven out, and virtue is thrown down in the streets, and the devil is the prince of this world. There is too much immediate reason for saying so, but ultimate reason there is none. Any part of life that we can see is nothing in its relation to the whole mystery and purpose of Divine duration. Our life of seventy years all told is a breath, a gasp, a sigh, sustaining no relation to the duration that is to be. Who is this man who sits as Chief Justice on the King's Bench, and then sits as Lord High Chancellor of England? Who is this Denbigh boy, who has, by unquestionable ability and by the absence of conscience, worked his way to great eminence? Hear him: how he storms on the bench; how his gaunt eyes express anger, hatred, malice! Hear how he sentences Sidney, and sends Baxter to prison, and turns the gaol key on John Bunyan! He will dine to-night with some of his own company, and in their wine how they will sneer at the Puritan fanatics! Surely the Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the righteous are given over to be burned and scourged by wicked hands. Let us travel eastward in London a while. Who is this man in front of us? He is an attorney. Where was he a little while ago? Before the judge. How was he treated by the judge? Contemptuously, as every honest man was treated. Who is that in the window of a Wapping public-house? A seaman? No, but a man with a seaman's clothes on. To whom can those eyes belong? Only to one man. Where are the eyebrows? Shaved off. Who is that? It is

the infernal Jeffreys. The populace is maddened, the populace will seize him, and drag him out, and bring him to the Council, and frighten the Lord Mayor of London, and Jeffreys shall beg to be taken to prison and be thankful for the shelter of a gaol. Let him go to the Tower and live a while, and then die within those capacious and to him inhospitable walls. The Lord will look after all issues. Believe not that bad men can have all their own way, and displace the throne and occupy it themselves. It would seem as if Providence allowed men to go a long way without punishment, and then made mean men, as well as prophets, signs to their generation and to after-ages.—Rev. Joseph Parker, D.D.

THE DIVINE ARTIST.

Eph. ii. 10.—"For we are His workmanship."

We have then set forth, first, as the result of the fulfilling of Christian men's desires after goodness and the work of their faith, the glory that accrues to Christ from perfected saints. They are His workmanship. You remember the old story of the artist who went into a fellow-artist's studio and left upon the easel one complete circle, swept with one master-whirl of the brush. Jesus Christ presents perfected men, who were but fragments of the circular whole, to an admiring universe as specimens of what He can do. His highest work is the redeeming of poor creatures like you and me, and the making of us perfect in goodness and worthy of our calling. We are His *chefs-d'œuvre*, the master work of the great Divine Artist. Think then, brethren, how here and now Christ's reputation is in our hands. Men judge of Him by us. The name of the Lord Jesus is glorified in you if you live "worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called," and people will think better of the

Master if His disciples are faithful. Depend upon it, if this Church, for instance, and the Christian people within these walls now, lived the lives that they ought to do and manifested the power of the Gospel as they might, there would be many who would say, "They have been with Jesus, and the Jesus that has made them what they are must be mighty and great." The best evidence of the power of the Gospel is your consecrated lives.—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

THE SINNER'S DEATH.

Eph. v. 14.—"Awake, thou that sleepest."

Oh, I would not be the man who has lived a sinful life, and who is about to die without hope! A pack of wolves around a man must be nothing to it. I heard the other day of one in India who was thought to be dead; and the Parsee method, you know, is not to bury their dead: they leave them naked in what are called the "Towers of Silence," where there are vultures always waiting; and within three or four hours after a corpse is laid there, there is no flesh left upon the bones. One poor man, who was only in a swoon, was thought to be dead, and was laid out in the tower; the vultures came, and one or two of them tore his flesh so terribly that he started up as from a dreadful dream. There were the vultures coming to devour him while he was yet alive; and defending himself as best he could, he managed to escape. What a plight to be in, lying in the place of the dead, surrounded by the cruel beaks of those fierce, ravenous birds! But in a far more awful position is a sinner when his sins come home to him. Only the Lord can drive those vultures away, and restore him to life and safety.—Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.

AMATEUR CHRISTIANS.

PHIL. iii. 14.—"I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

THE wedge is that which pierces through all the loosely compacted textures against which it is pressed. The Roman strategy forced the way of the legion through the loose-ordered ranks of barbarian foes by arraying it in that wedge-like form. So we, if we are to advance, must gather ourselves together and put a point upon our lives by compaction and concentration of effort and energy on the one purpose. The conquering word is, "This one thing I do." The difference between the amateur and the artist is that the one pursues an art at intervals by spurts, as a *parergon* —a thing that is done in the intervals of other occupations —and that the other makes it his life's business. There are a great many amateur Christians amongst us, who pursue the Christian life by spurts and starts. If you want to be a Christian after God's pattern—and unless you are you are scarcely a Christian at all—you have to make it your business, to give the same attention, the same concentration, the same unwavering energy, to it which you do to your trade. The man of one book, the man of one idea, the man of one aim, is the formidable and the successful man. People will call you a fanatic; never mind. Better be a fanatic and get what you aim at, which is the highest thing, than be so broad that, like a stream spreading itself out over miles of mud, there is no scour in it anywhere, no current, and therefore stagnation and death. Gather yourselves together, and amidst all the side issues and nearer aims keep this in view as the aim to which all are to be subservient—that, "whether I eat or drink, or whatsoever I do, I may do all to the glory of God." Let sorrow and joy, and trade and profession, and study and business, and house and wife and children, and all home joys, be the means by

which you may become like the Master who has died for this end: that we may become partakers of His holiness.—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

ATROPHY.

Col. ii. 13.—"Being dead in your sins."

This is true of our nature on all sides. Charles Darwin, by far the greatest observer of our time, observed other things than worms, pigeons, and dogs. He observed himself with all the impartiality and exactness with which he observed them; and, for my part, I find as much to teach me in the few pages of autobiography that he has left us as in his volumes of natural history. Here is his confirmation of the truth we are studying: "Up to the age of thirty poetry of many kinds gave me great pleasure, and as a schoolboy I took intense delight in Shakespeare. I have also said that pictures formerly gave me considerable, and music very great, delight. But now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry. I have tried lately to read Shakespeare, and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me. I have also almost lost my taste for pictures or music. If I had to live my life again I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week, for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would thus have been kept active through use. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character, by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature."—Rev. Prof. G. A. Smith.

HEAVEN.

Col. iii. 1.—"Where Christ sits at the right hand of God."

I know of nothing that is mighty enough to draw men's desires and fix solid reasonable thought and love upon that awful future except the belief that Christ is there. I think

that the men who have most deeply realised what a solemn and yet what a vague and impalpable thing the conception of immortal life beyond the grave is will be most ready to admit that the thought is cold, cheerless, full of blank misgivings and of waste places, in which the speculative spirit feels itself very much a foreigner. There is but one thought that flashes warmth into the coldness and turns the awfulness and the terror of the chilling magnificence into attractiveness, and homelikeness, and sweetness, and that is that Christ is there sitting at the right hand of God. Foreign lands are changed in their aspect to us when we have brothers and sisters there; and our Brother has gone whither we, when we send our thoughts after Him, can feel that our home is, because there He is. The weariness of existence here is only perpetuated and intensified when we think of it as prolonged for ever, but with Christ in the heavens the heavens become the home of our hearts. —Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

"RESURGAM."

1 Thess. iv. 16.—"The dead in Christ shall rise."

We are told that when Sir Christopher Wren commenced to build this cathedral he had a stone brought to him out of the ruin and rubbish of the fire, on which he found written, to his surprise and thankfulness the one word "Resurgam." So, my brethren, in all the wreckage and failures of life there is written, not in terror, but as an omen of good things, "Resurgam"—"I shall rise again."—Rev. Canon Newbolt.

THE STABLE HEART.

2 Thess. ii. 16, 17.—"Comfort your heart, and stablish you in every good word and work."

Then, again, the comforted heart will be a stable heart. Our fixedness and stability are not natural immobility, but

communicated steadfastness. There must be, first, the consolation of Christ before there can be the calmness of a settled heart. We all know how vacillating, how driven to and fro by gusts of passion and winds of doctrine and forces of earth, our resolutions and spirits are. But thistledown glued to a firm surface will be firm, and any light thing lashed to a solid one will be solid; and reeds shaken with the wind may be turned into brazen pillars that cannot be moved. If we have Christ in our hearts He will be our consolation first and our stability next. Why should it be that we are spasmodic and fluctuating, and the slaves of ups and downs, like some barometer in stormy weather, now at "set fair" and then away down where "much rain" is written? There is no need for it. Get Christ into your heart, and your mercury will stand at one height. Why should it be that at one hour the flashing waters fill the harbour, and that six hours afterwards there is a waste of ooze and filth? It need not be. Our hearts may be like some land-locked lake that knows no tide. "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." The comforted and stable heart will be a fruitful heart. "In *every* good word and work." Ah, how fragmentary is our goodness, like the broken torsos of the statues of fair gods dug up in some classic land. There is no reason why each of us should not appropriate and make our own the forms of goodness to which we are least naturally inclined, and cultivate and possess a symmetrical, fully developed, all-round goodness, in some humble measure after the pattern of Jesus Christ our Lord. Practical righteousness "in every good word and work" is the outcome of all the sacred and secret consolations and blessings that Jesus Christ imparts. There are many Christian people who are like those swallow-holes, as they call them, characteristic of limestone countries, where a great river plunges into a cave, and is no more

heard of. You do not get your comforts and your blessing for that, brother, but in order that all the joy and peace, all the calmness and the communion, that you realise in the secret place of the Most High, may be translated into goodness and manifest righteousness in the market-place and the street. We get our goodness where we get our consolation: from Jesus Christ and His cross.—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

FORMS OF WORSHIP.

2 Tim. iii. 5.—"Having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."

Seeing that the purest and the simplest of forms may become like a dirty window, an obscuring medium which shuts out instead of lets in the light, it seems to me that the Churches are wisest which admit least of the dangerous element into their external worship, and try to have as little of form as may keep the spirit. I know that simple forms may be abused quite as much as elaborate ones. I know that a Quaker's meeting-house is often quite as much a house of formal, and not of real, communion as a Roman Catholic cathedral. Let us remember how full of dangers they all and always are. And let us be very sure that we do not substitute Church membership, coming to chapel, going to prayer-meeting, teaching in Sunday-schools, reading devout books, and the like, for the inward submission to the power.—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

OLD SERMONS.

James i. 18.—"Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth."

When Professor Park was asked "whether an old sermon might be preached a second time," he said, "Only on con-

dition that it was born again." It is so with all Scripture. The Bible lives by its rebirths. We must "receive with meekness the implanted"—*i.e.*, the inborn—"word." "Of His own will He brought us forth," or mothered us, "by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."—Rev. J. Clifford, D.D.

THE FUTURE.

James iv. 13-17.—"Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain, whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings; all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

How do we know what will be on the morrow? It has grown into a proverb that we ought to expect the unexpected; for often the very thing happens which we thought would not happen. We are constantly surprised by the events which occur around us. In God's great oratory of providence there are passages of wondrous eloquence, because of the surprise power that is in them. They come upon us at unawares, and overwhelm us. How can we reckon upon anything in a world like this, where nothing is certain but uncertainty? Besides, the folly is seen in the fact of the frailty of our lives and the brevity of them. "What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time." That cloud upon the mountain—you see it as you rise in the morning; you have scarcely dressed yourself before all trace of it has gone. Here in our streets the other night we came to worship through a thick fog, and found it here even in the house of prayer. But while we worshipped there came a breath of wind; and on our

way home a stranger would not have thought that London had been but a few hours before so dark with dirty mist: it had all disappeared. Life is even as a vapour. Sometimes those vapours, especially at the time of sunset, are exceedingly brilliant. They seem to be magnificence itself when the sun paints them with heavenly colours; but in a little while they are all gone, and the whole panorama of the sunset has disappeared. Such is our life. It may sometimes be very bright and glorious; but still it is only like a painted cloud, and very soon the cloud and the colour on it are alike gone. We cannot reckon upon the clouds, their laws are so variable, and their conditions so obscure. Such also is our life.—Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.

THE SPIRIT OF LOVE.

James v. 11.—"Very pitiful and of tender mercy."

There was a working-man whom we knew, a man nervously anxious about his work, married, and the father of a family of little boys and girls. He had hard labour, and he overtaxed his strength, and finally the strain seized on his brain, and he was sent to a lunatic asylum. After three years he came out well, and during the second week he came to see us. "I have made it my special duty," he said; "I could not come the first week, but I came the instant I could, to thank you for sending my children to the country each year that I have been ill. My home has been kept alive for me. I tell you honestly, it was my children's letters to me from the country, their happy little letters about the sunshine and the fields, the bunches of sweet wild flowers they sent to me, that brought back my senses and made me a sane man again. At first, in my quiet, sensible moments, the thought of my wife and children alone in the world, no one to care for them perhaps, no one

to earn money for them, no one to keep my home together, drove me back again and again to madness; but when these happy little letters came from the girls and boys in the country, I felt that they were cared for: and then during my quiet times I used to think over their letters and look at the wild flowers they sent me, and I knew that my little children were joyful. It made me well, and now I have got to work; and no matter how little I earn, I'll send some shillings to help to send the children to the fields, even if mine do not go at all this year." That is a true story, and here is another, which touches a different point. A little lad, a cripple, came one day to one of our helpers, and said, "I have a great secret to tell you, and I have not told mother, for I wish to surprise her and make her happy when I go home. Do send my sister to the country instead of me. My name is down to go, I know; I went last year, and came home ever so much better. If Sissie went, she would be able to see again. She is nearly blind, and mother went to see her at the hospital, and came home to our dead baby, and cried all the day long. She told me Sissie was going blind, and yet she has such bright eyes. I never said anything, but I thought I would come round in the morning and ask you to send Sissie away instead of me." So we promised the little fellow his sister should go, and he turned away happy, saying, "That will stop mother crying." But the story, which is full of the beauty of sacrifice, does not end here. A woman who stood by, thought to be rough-hearted by her neighbours, was listening to the boy, and laid her hand on his shoulder. "Are you not going then to the country?" "Oh no," he said. "Sissie is going; she must go." "I'll keep back mine, then," said this woman, "my two children who were to go. Run and tell your mother, you shall go too." And this woman was driven all day by the hardest work. She

had to keep her paralysed husband and her small children, and she did not even know the cripple's mother. It was an outburst of self-sacrifice which had no motive but pure love. We did not spoil the sacrifice then, but we took care in the end to manage to send them all. And now, when I had written so far, I begun to dream with my eyes open o London, and the children, and their holiday ; and I seemed to come in my dream out of a fair and well-watered land to a great thick wood : and on the outskirts of the wood the trees grew tall and broad, with ample room, every one as it pleased it ; and great glades were there, where all the flowers were fresh and gay, and all the saplings shot upwards, unrestrained and free, and full of the grace of life : and in and through all went a swift wind and a quickening sunlight ; no trouble, no bitter gloom, no prisoning of energy, save that which tree or flower might hold within. All without was happiness. But an impulse drove me further into the wood, and as I went the trees grew closer and closer together, and the undergrowth was thick as spears in battle, and the sun was hidden by the thick foliage, and the wind could not move, and it seemed that dreadful beasts, whose pleasure was to torture and devour, lurked therein. And I looked and saw that where there was a break in the straight undergrowth the saplings were stunted and sickly and dying for the light and air, and the little flowers no sooner opened their eyes than they grew weary. And a great pity filled my heart, and I said to Love, who stood by me, I knew not how, " Let me carry the flowers and the small trees away and plant them for a time in the brighter world without the wood, in the sunlight and the wind and the hearing of the waters, and bring them back, if they must come back. At least, they will remember beauty and life and tell it to their parent trees and flowers ; and they will have the happiness of memory

and hope and a happiness within, though the place be as a place of death." And Love said, "Take them, but bring them home again"; and I awoke from my dream of London rich and London poor, and the children in the darkness of its wood: and I said, "I will tell this to my people, and they will remember it and heed its story."—Rev. Stopford A. Brooke, LL.D.

ELECTION.

1 Peter i. 2.—"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God."

I preached for six Sundays at York Road here, but the good people thought I was not old enough, though I was twenty-five. In the next year—1842—I was invited to preach at Sheffield, where they wanted a minister. I remember one Saturday evening the deacons called upon me and asked me if I would not preach a sermon on doctrine. I said, "But I have been preaching on doctrine: last Sunday the doctrine of prayer and repentance." "No," they said; "we want a sermon on doctrine." "Do you mean election?" and they smiled, "Yes." So next day morning I preached from "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience"—not election straight away to heaven, but election to obedience, and if you are not obedient, it is a proof you are not elected, and if you are not converted, you are not elected; be obedient, as God said we should be, and that would be a proof you are elected. Whereon two gentlemen got up and walked out, in indignant remonstrance against the heresy of this young man. Twenty years after that I was in the chair of the Congregational Union, which had its sessions in the same church.—Rev. Newman Hall, D.D.

THE HEART OF GOD.

1 JOHN viii. 16.—"God is love."

THE waters come pouring down from the Arctic zone into the Gulf of Mexico, and there they are warmed and grow into the Gulf Stream, and they go pouring out along our coast and across the Atlantic Ocean, and spread out like a great fan, and cover with their warmth the whole European coast, and the lands they kiss answer with the song and the joy of fruitful harvest. So let us come to the heart of God, and get warm. Have we come out of the Arctic zone? There is warmth enough here.—REV. L. ABBOTT, D.D.

THE CHARACTER OF GOD.

1 John viii. 16.—"God is love."

SAID an old woman to a friend of mine who was making known to her the Gospel, "I have always thought that God Almighty was a better being than many people made Him out to be." And in that saying you have an explanation of much of the unbelief of the present day, and an indication of the defective character of much of our preaching. Men remain alienated from God for this, among other, reasons: that His character is painted in a manner which, instead of attracting their love and trust, is revolting to their highest instincts.—REV. W. LANDELS.

PROPHECY.

Rev. i. 1.—"The Revelation of Jesus Christ."

LET us suppose some amethyst with a crest and some letters engraven on it. If you turn the amethyst and look through the uncut part of the stone, all these are dimly seen. Turn the amethyst round, and the engraver's intention is clearly brought out before you. So with the semi-transparent amethyst of prophecy. If you look at it from the

uncut side of the gem, the letters and the crest have a dark beauty. Then turn the cut side, and you see the pathetic image of the cross engraven five hundred and fifty years before. We lose a good deal by taking such a single example as that. The prophecies are to be taken together. Frederick the Great once asked one of his chaplains to give him some evidence of the truth of the Gospel which was short and easily remembered. The chaplain said, "The Jews, sire." However true that might be, it was of course not the whole truth. It would be more true to say, "The Jews and the Gentiles."—Right Rev. W. Alexander, D.D., Bishop of Derry.

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL.

Rev. xiv. 6.—"The everlasting Gospel."

Some one not long ago published a book with the title, "Gospels of Yesterday." It discussed the writings of several authors who in our generation have caught the popular ear, and analysed their doctrines with keen incisiveness. At present I will not pass a judgment on its estimates. But how striking the name itself! "Gospels of Yesterday"—how many there have been of them! Teacher after teacher has arisen who seemed to himself, and perhaps for a while to others also, to have discovered the panacea for the wounds and woes of humanity; one system after another has come to the front and attracted attention. They have had their day, but now they are gospels of yesterday. They lasted as long as they could, but the world outgrew them. There is only one Gospel which is everlasting—which can pass from country to country, from continent to continent, and be everywhere at home; which time cannot wither nor custom stale; which has the safe and certain reversion of all the future.—Rev. James Stalker, D.D.

THE CITIZENS OF THE CITY.

Rev. xxii. 15.—"For without are dogs and sorcerers," etc.

They used to say that Venice glass was so made that any poison poured into it shivered the vessel. Any drop of sin poured into your cup of communion with God shatters the cup and spills the wine. Whosoever thinks himself a citizen of that great city, if he falls into transgression, and soils the cleanness of his hands, and ruffles the calm of his pure heart by self-willed sinfulness, will wake to find himself not within the battlements, but lying wounded, robbed, solitary, in the pitiless desert. My brother, it is "the righteous nation" that "enters in" even here on earth.—Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D.

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